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ASIAN ODYSSEY

by
DMITRI ALIOSHIN



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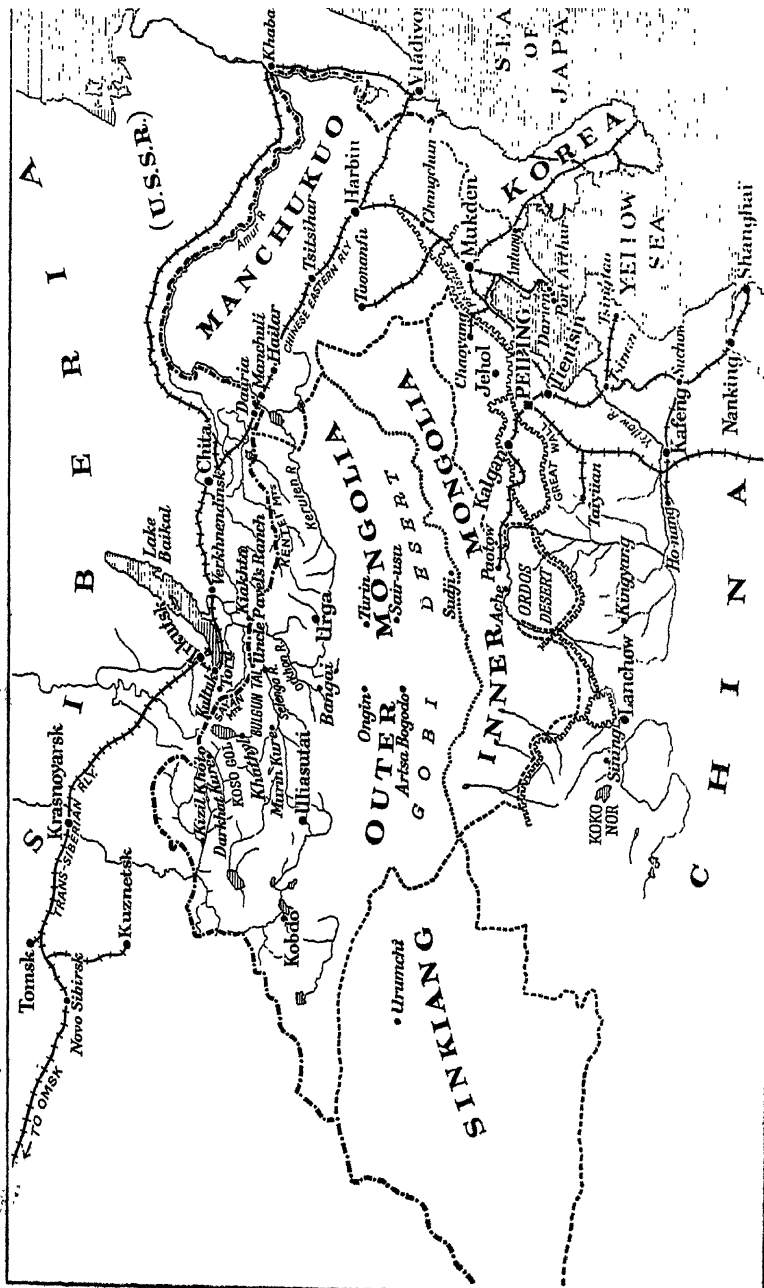
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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK
TO THE
RISING GENERATION

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MAP OF MONGOLIA AND THE SIBERIAN FRONTIER

ASIAN ODYSSEY

PART I

FLIGHT INTO MANCHURIA

I

AT dawn I started across Lake Baikal, a lonely rider on the frozen wastes of a lake four hundred miles in length and over thirty-three wide. I felt like a character out of a Jules Verne novel, lost in the frigid deserts of the Moon. In all the vast white desolation around me, no living thing was discernible. The mountains guarding the far shore merged with the haze of the horizon, and the farther I penetrated into the heart of the appalling silence the farther away and more unapproachable they seemed to become.

I thought of my childhood days when I had made this same trip with my father in a huge sled, smothered in furs. I remembered that the wild Siberian horses, led by a team of Siberian huskies, had made the crossing in a single day, and figured that if luck was with me I could do the same now.

Then, as now, I was bound for Harbin, in Manchuria. Only how altered were the circumstances of my life ! The world of my boyhood and youth was gone ; gone were the peace and security of my student days. Even the three long years of the war, in which, though still in my early twenties, I had served as an officer in the Imperial Russian army, were growing remote. The proud throne of the Tsar of all the Russias, that had always seemed so imperishable to me, had been

levelled by the whirlwind of revolution, and like so many of my class I was in flight before the wrath of the people. Now, as in childhood, I was bound for my father's home in Harbin, but as a fugitive, alone and desperate, my heart heavy with bitterness and despair, the fear of death in my soul.

When the sun was directly overhead I stopped for rest and food. With the wood I had gathered before setting out across the lake, I kindled a fire and we ate, a man and a horse, hemmed in by the fathomless quiet of a dead world. Semen, the red-headed giant who had been my orderly, had supplied me with a large bag of frozen Siberian ravioli, dried meat, hard military bread, tea, sugar and salt. I had a gun and plenty of ammunition, and expected to hunt for the rest of my food on the way.

All that afternoon we plodded on, until I began to despair of ever reaching the end of that enormous plain of ice and snow. But with the coming of sunset the mountains before me suddenly drew near. Vividly outlined in bold blues and yellows, reds and purples, their beauty warmed me with new hope, and I urged my tired horse to hurry. As if she understood we must reach the shore before dark, she quickened her pace. Finally, just as night was falling, we came to the shore of the lake and found a place to camp, where the snow was thin enough to yield a small patch of grass.

My horse pastured and tethered with a long rope, I built a fire. Later I scraped the fire away and, moving it to another spot, spread my blankets over the warm earth and wove a barrier of branches for protection against the wind. At last, after dragging in sufficient underbrush to be able to replenish the fire without leaving my bed, I crawled in. The horse moved in circles about me and, after the fire had died down, came close and slept near me.

How long we travelled, my sturdy Siberian pony

and I, is not clear in my memory. It may have been a week, it may have been ten days or two weeks. Time lost all significance ; there was only empty space before me as behind ; the only sound was the plodding tread of the horse's hoofs. Even with the strictest rationing my supplies had given out, and it was desperately necessary that I find food somewhere.

In vain I scanned the ground for footprints. Everything living had hidden securely in caves, lairs, holes, coverts or dens. Winter ruled the hills and the woods. It had locked up the streams and stripped the trees, burying the leaves under a frozen white carpet. The birds had long since flown to a warmer climate, and the deer migrated to open pastures. The bear slept his long winter sleep, and the squirrels waited in their hollows for a sign that cold had passed.

Tortured with hunger, I rode through a narrow valley. It was several days since I had eaten, and in desperation I munched the snow. Finger on the trigger of my rifle, I was determined to shoot anything that moved. At last . . . a grey shadow appeared near one of the slopes, stopped for an instant, then dashed toward the forest. I sent a bullet after it. It jumped high into the air, fell to the ground, and rolled down the hill. Like a wild beast, I let out a bellow and ran to my victim. . . . It was a gaunt, famished wolf.

Certainly I am not proud of the scene that followed. But I ate that miserable animal and packed away what remained for the future. I cannot tell how the meat tasted ; I only know that my poor horse sniffed and snorted with disgust as she watched me eat.

Day followed day, without end or meaning. One morning about three o'clock I was awakened by the intense cold. The Moon lay low upon the horizon. It was shaped like an egg and looked lazy—too tired to shine, as if seeking a place to sleep. A silver circle surrounded it like a diadem. Across the valley the

forest stood silent as a squadron of armoured knights piercing the sky with lances. The quietness of the grave weighed upon me, and my mind was filled with thoughts of death. This, then, is the end, I thought. Of what use to struggle any more? Better to lie here, to rest, to sleep, forever.

Suddenly it came to me that I should freeze to death if I did not stir myself, that this almost blissful sense of abandonment to weariness was dangerous. Rising, I took my horse by the reins and started to walk. The rest of the night we kept moving, going nowhere in particular, for by now I had lost all hope of ever reaching my destination.

And then suddenly, just as day was breaking, I heard the barking of a dog in the distance. I listened intently. . . . Yes, it was the barking of a dog. Never before or since have I heard a sound that moved me so deeply. I turned my face to the sky and fell upon my knees. The tears streamed down my face as I prayed in silence.

I would never have found the hut if that dog had not barked. The place was hidden by the bushes in a narrow ravine between two hills. I saw no trace of a path leading to it; the new snow had covered it. Coming closer to the barking, I saw that someone must have been shovelling, but everything was hidden behind the big drifts.

Now I heard a voice: "Quiet! What are you making a noise about?" Up the hill, by a fence, an old man was standing, the palm of his hand raised to shade his eyes from the glaring sun. I called out and, with a sigh of relief, started up the hill. The old man watched me carefully. When I came up to him he placed his hand on my shoulder.

"Tired, my son? Come into my humble hut. You are welcome."

We passed through a little corridor which led us

into a small room. The right corner, the usual place for holy images, was completely covered with ikons, before which numerous oil lamps were burning. Bright pictures, without frames, were pasted on the walls, forming a peculiar wallpaper design. Flowers in pots stood at the windows. Four or five cats sat hunched in various positions, indifferent to my presence. The sweet aroma of holy oils and incense spread a glow of rest and comfort in the warm, pleasant interior.

"Sit down, my son," said the old man, pointing to the wide bench that stood alongside the oven. "Get your things off . . . everything . . . then wash yourself, and climb up on the oven. You are good for nothing now, you had better sleep. Don't worry, I shall take care of your horse."

Naked, I wrapped myself in the blanket and got into the warm bed on top of the oven. I cannot describe my happiness at that moment. The old man had set out a pot of milk, a jar of honey and a loaf of bread, and these I devoured before drifting off into a profound sleep.

I slept the rest of the day and the whole of the night, and awakened a new being. At first I could not recognize my surroundings. The place was so clean and quiet ; the only sound the contented purring of the cats. I raised myself on my elbow and looked around.

The long, golden stretches of sun on the floor told me that it was still early morning. The table was set for breakfast and looked appetizing, indeed. The warm room was filled with that peculiar radiance which only the reflection of the sun against snow crystals can give.

Wrapped in this shower of light I distinguished the white figure of the old man, on his knees before the ikons, silently performing his morning devotions. A white blouse covered his aged body. His hair and long beard were as spotlessly white as the snow outside.

I watched him in silence, as again and again he humbly bowed and touched his forehead to the floor. This was no ordinary peasant or hunter, I knew; very likely he was some holy hermit who had left the world to save his soul.

He finished at last and blew out all the candles, save the one in front of a huge silver ikon of Christ, an ancient image, its colours faded and blackened. Then the old man, murmuring in his whiskers, poured some milk for the cats, who surrounded him in a close circle purring loudly and rubbing their backs against his legs.

"Now, there . . . here is your milk . . . eat in peace."

"Father," I called out, "may I have some too?"

"Good morning, my son. Come to the table. Everything is ready." My host's face radiated kindness, and I slid down from the oven and began to dress.

"Not those things," interrupted the old man. "Here, put on these old trousers of mine. Later we will wash your things and get you back into your own clothes."

What a pleasure it was to splash cold water on my face and feel it running over my neck and ears! In the mountains I had washed with snow, then dried at the fire, but that was entirely different from having a full pan of water in a warm room, and a towel to dry my face upon. This done, we sat at the table and had tea, bread and butter. The old man did not ask any questions but looked at me thoughtfully and with sympathy. Little by little, I told him my story.

"Woman . . . woman . . . there is always a woman at the bottom of all our troubles," my host said, as if he had been thinking his own long thoughts while I was talking. "From the beginning of the world it has been the same. All of them, like the mother, Eve, sooner or later push us to self-destruction. That is

why I am here." He nodded his head and sighed. The old man was far away in his thoughts. After an interval of silence he continued.

"My name is Rubin. . . . Her name was Nastya . . . Nastya . . . and I still love her though I have seen ninety-six years. She left me two years ago—she sleeps there in my garden. She was born to be a queen ; she just couldn't tolerate the lack of anything. I took her as my wife when I was a merchant in Saratov. Many were the ships I sent up and down the Volga River. I had lived a full, contented and happy life. And then Nastya came along. She demanded so much that in a few years I was on the verge of bankruptcy. God forgive my sin ; I began to counterfeit our good money, was caught, and sent to Siberia to serve twenty years in the penitentiary. Nastya came with me of her own free will. She lived in the town and we saw each other occasionally. Then at the end of ten years I was freed for good behaviour and permitted to live on probation for the rest of my term. We were very happy here, Nastya and I . . . poor soul . . ." The old man interrupted his story. "Well, we must get to work," he said.

I asked to see my horse, and he led me into a small yard almost completely covered with a roof extending from the four walls. I examined her carefully but could not find any change since we had left Baikal. Rubin showed me his cow, a few chickens, and his own shabby horse. He made his living by keeping a row of large beehives in a grove of linden trees. In the summer and autumn he earned enough from his honey to last him through the rest of the year.

"How far to the nearest city ? " I asked.

"Chita is twelve miles from here," he answered.

I knew that Chita was about three hundred and fifty miles from Irkutsk and about the same distance from the Manchurian border. It was the capital of the Transbaikalian Cossacks and Semenov was the ataman.

Although my friend Nikolay was a Ussuri Cossack, there was a possibility that I might find him in Chita, as well as my cousin Alexander, the son of my uncle Feodor. They had left Manchuria and come to Transbaikalia about eight years before, to build flour mills and open a new steamship line on the Argun, Shilka and Selenga rivers which, with their navigable tributaries, formed the highroads of the vast country of Manchuria, Mongolia and Transbaikalia. I knew they also operated a gold mine somewhere in the vicinity of Chita.

However, I was in no hurry to go. I wanted to prolong my visit and take a much-needed rest. I hoped that the old man would not refuse me if I added a little gold to his store in return for my stay.

The days passed quietly. In the morning we would clean the snow away, chop wood for the oven, milk the cow, feed the horses, chickens and dogs. Then lunch and a nap, more chores in the yard, supper and peaceful sleep. A great deal of my host's time was spent in prayer and reading from his Bible. He stayed upon bended knee in front of his ikons for long hours before retiring and I marvelled at the wonderful refuge offered by religion to those who still believed.

I could understand him because I had come from an Orthodox family. My grandfather, on my mother's side, had retired to a monastery at the age of seventy-five. Here he had hoped to live in peace and quiet for the rest of his life, but he lived too long to escape the horrors of the revolution. My father, too, had occupied the honorary position of warden of one of the cathedrals. However, he was sceptical, not only on questions regarding the service, but also about the interpretations of the Holy Scriptures.

The old man was a revelation to me. Quietly and slowly he talked of a great variety of things. History, geography, literature—all had been woven for him into a meaningful design by his religious beliefs. He

viewed the world through Christian eyes, applying Christian standards and measurements to everything that happened in his personal life or in the world at large. When he talked, all events seemed simple; answers to the most involved questions presented themselves naturally.

One evening we were sitting quietly by the table. One topic had been exhausted, another had not presented itself. A snowstorm howled outside, as if crying in impotent rage because it could not crush the tiny hut, hidden between the two hills in the grove.

"Dmitri," began the old man, "I am going to die soon and I am worried. Perhaps you will help me. I have already dug a grave for myself beside my wife in the garden. I need a coffin now. Perhaps you have noticed the heavy oak logs in the yard. From them I want to cut the planks for a good and a heavy box. Will you lend me your strong arms . . . tomorrow?"

Of course, I could not refuse, although nothing was farther from my desire than to work on the coffin that presaged his death.

It took us three days to finish the job. The old man was as happy as a child and thanked me over and over again. As a sign of his friendship, he hung a beautiful porcelain ikon of the Virgin Mary round my neck.

Another week passed and with regret I decided to leave my good friend. He gave me the address of his grandson who had just returned to Chita from the army in Europe, and as I rode away he stood watching me from his gate. I waved my hand for the last time as I was about to descend into another valley, rode another hundred yards, then turned round and came back to the crest of the hill. He was still there, the lonely figure of a very old man who had come to mean much to me.

"Good-bye," I shouted, then galloped away.

The twelve miles to Chita seemed a joke after what I had been through, but now I began to ponder on what the future had in store for me.

I recalled how Kerensky, the new leader of Revolutionary Russia, had fallen out with the strongest of his potential allies, the Cossack General Kornilov. The situation was an alarming one, from the point of view of Kerensky's personal ambitions, and he had cast about for a general who did not know the defects of his vacillating character. He realized that he could no longer depend upon the military leaders within European Russia, but he remembered that in faraway Siberia there was a man, unscrupulous, with ideas and ways of putting them into effect. That was General Semenov, formerly commander of the Fifth Corps, chieftain of the Transbaikalian Cossacks, and it was to this half-breed, more Mongol than Russian, that Kerensky entrusted the adventure of organizing shock troops of Asiatics who would protect the "provisional government," which was to say Kerensky himself. Semenov remained, but not the provisional government he was supposed to protect.

In order to make the organization of his personal guard more appealing to Semenov and his assistants, Kerensky had given them a significant name: "The Savage Division." Among Semenov's chief generals the name of Baron von Ungern-Sternberg was prominent. While we were in Pskov, during the war, I had heard from Nikolay fantastic stories of the baron's mad bravery, of his justice to horses and cruelty to his own officers.

I wondered as I rode along how well they were maintaining this army, this "court" in Chita. I had no doubt as to the inventiveness and the daring of these men. Perhaps, I thought, I shall have as hard

a time escaping from these Russian saviours-to-be, as from the Bolsheviks.

Chita, though the capital of Transbaikalia, is a small town of a pronounced pioneer type. It is securely situated behind the high Baikal Mountains, which begin in the knotted, wild Sayan ridge in the south and lose themselves to the north in the wilderness of the Siberian subarctic. On the east, Chita is guarded by three mountain ridges: the magnificent Yablonoi, the Nerchinsky Mountains, and the famous Khingan. The valley opens only into Mongolia, and even here the vastness of the prairies guarantees Chita from any serious invasion. The Ingoda River provides a natural line of communication for these Cossacks and their brethren, the Amur and Ussuri Cossacks, two other famous Russian groups on the eastern frontier. The feeling that this whole district gives one is best expressed by the slang saying, "Come and get us—try it." The population knew it and acted accordingly.

As an officer of the Imperial army, I made my first visit to the commandant's office to register. In answer to my inquiry, a young adjutant informed me that they had an officer named Nikolay Chernov. He was one of the officers most esteemed by both Semenov and Baron Ungern. He would be most delighted to escort me to Nikolay's quarters if I could but wait until he was relieved from duty.

This adjutant was a young chap who still believed in the magic efficacy of "pull." Apparently my old friend Nikolay was *persona grata* in this God-forgotten place. The adjutant also informed me that Semenov lacked artillery and would welcome any artillery officer, meaning myself, who would take upon himself the task of organizing a division. This flattery continued for some time, then horses were brought round, and we started off. I noticed that my companion

seemed to have little in common with his mount. He had apparently deserted his own infantry regiment and resolved to try his luck with something new—something that promised unlimited possibilities in the near future. Well, who could blame him? Then, too, he was a nice, sturdy fellow, so naïve in appearance that it was impossible to take him seriously. Had I been a girl, I'm sure I should have called him in the Russian phrase, "my sweet cherry." Most girls would have loved him, a smart, charmingly dressed boy of barely twenty.

Nikolay greeted me warmly; but a forbidding atmosphere of importance surrounded him. While we tried to have an informal talk, he was visited by many of the military, and finally he apologized saying that other things demanded his time but that he would be pleased to see me at his wedding that evening. A wedding? Yes, I was assured, his wedding . . . so I departed to buy wedding presents.

Walking down the main thoroughfare, Amur Street, I found to my astonishment that the shops were full of goods, most of them in the luxury class. Little was Oriental, however, nor could I find any trace of the things I had expected to find. I knew that close by in the open plains near the Kenteiski Mountains there were buried cities dating from ancient days. Great granite blocks of ancient construction, various utensils, and Mongolian monuments magnificently inscribed had been uncovered, but in the whole of the city I found nothing to indicate that this ancient wealth lay so near.

The wedding proved to be quite an affair. It began in the church with many officers present. I could hardly see the bride and groom, hidden by the resplendent military men. When the ceremony ended and the happy couple moved beneath the arch of naked swords toward the exit, I recognized Nikolay. He was gorgeous, magnificently strong and handsome,

but the lady caught my eye. It was Katrin—Katrin from Pskov, whom I had seen but twice, but could never forget. I blushed, remembering how I had gone to her as Nikolay's advocate, turned traitor and made love to her myself. She wore a silver-white gown with pearls round her beautiful throat and a sparkling diadem in her luxuriant black hair. Two little boys of about ten carried her long train, embroidered with small silver stars. Escorted by a crowd of friends, they adjourned to the military club. Here we had an excellent feast, an endless variety of wines and food. The orchestra played gay tunes and it soon became so noisy that the spoken toasts fell upon deaf ears. After the dinner, our host and his beautiful wife opened the ball and then retired, asking us to continue the festivities upon our own account and to the best of our abilities. To the accompaniment of jokes and laughter, best wishes, and much rice, the bride and groom left the club.

The first waltz ended, I escorted my partner to her husband, a broad-shouldered Cossack. We had been seated near each other at dinner and had attempted some conversation there. Now he invited me to join them in one of the side rooms where black coffee was being served. My new friend, a lieutenant colonel, found me a good listener, and with a few more drinks the rising fumes bred friendship. He took me more or less into his confidence as a friend of Nikolay's . . . and the wine helped to heighten the confidence. In a few moments he was making a straightforward offer to keep me in Chita to organize an artillery division.

"But, colonel, that would cost a great deal of money," I interrupted doubtfully. "The formation of batteries is not only expensive, but the problem of supplying them with ammunition, horses and men takes a great deal more money. How could you solve that problem?" We spoke with open frankness now,

the two of us alone, for the colonel's lady had been claimed by another officer as his dancing partner.

"Don't worry about trifles. Patriots always find the way out of such difficulties. You know that greedy merchants carry their cargoes back and forth through Transbaikalia all the time, earning profits for themselves alone, thinking nothing of their fatherland. As no one else will supply us with food, clothing or ammunition, we just take it for ourselves. Money—Forget it, you will have all of the money you want, besides rapid promotion."

Somehow I could not separate this in my mind from common banditry, so I did not answer. The colonel misunderstood my silence for high praise of Semenov and his assistants. He became enthusiastic about Baron Ungern, whose justice and fairness, in the telling, became fabulous. To illustrate his point, the colonel told me of an incident. One morning on his regular inspection Baron Ungern discovered that the salt fish, given each day to the soldiers, was not of the best quality.

"Why," exclaimed my new friend, "the officer in charge was sent to a military prison where he was fed upon that spoiled fish, and nothing else, for three days. And at no time was he given a single drop of water. But here is another story. Once the baron discovered that the horses were receiving an inferior quality of oats. He immediately ordered the officer in charge imprisoned and had him fed with the spoiled oats. Yes, sir . . ." The stories rolled on, one after the other. I met them all with never-failing interest and gratitude, for I was learning something that might in time be useful.

I returned to my hotel greatly perplexed ; I could not understand the pattern events were taking.

The next day I decided to return to my home in north China—Manchuria to be precise. It was now

only three hundred and fifty miles away. A train would take me there in a single day. "What a relief it would be to get away from this wholesale Russian insanity!" I thought.

On the way to say good-bye to Nikolay, I crossed Ataman Square with its administrative offices. Suddenly I felt sorry for the civilian population whom these military men intended to govern. What did these men, bred in the barracks, know of the executive, legislative and judicial functions of a complicated state machine? All they knew was army routine, army regulations, army punishments. Now they would create their own laws, execute them in person, and—of course—dispense with the judicial branch as pure nonsense. I had respect for such men as Denikin, Wrangel, Kolchak, Kornilov and many of the others left in Europe, but I felt doubtful about "Semenov, Baron Ungern and Co."

I had lunch alone with Nikolay at his hotel. He was in great spirits, as if the things he was doing lent him strength and inspiration. There was something strange about him, an atmosphere of unreal exhilaration, so much so that I could not help but ask him what was the matter with Chita, and with him. He hesitated for a moment, but could not retain the secret any longer. He was as eager to tell as a woman or a child. He opened the door and looked outside, then closed it again and pulled his chair close to mine.

"Dmitri, we have been friends for a long time. I know that I can trust you with our 'great plan.' It is known to but few and I must ask that you keep the secret until we succeed or fail. I respect your opinion and would like to have your judgment upon the matter.

"The whole world is rotten. Greed, hatred and cruelty are in the saddle. We intend to organize a new empire; a new civilization. It will be called the Middle Asiatic Buddhist Empire, carved out of Mongolia, Manchuria and Eastern Siberia. Communication

has already been established for that purpose with Djan-Zo-Lin, the war lord of Manchuria, and with Hutukhta, the Living Buddha of Mongolia. Here in these historic plains we will organize an army as powerful as that of Genghis Khan. Then we will move, as that great man did, and smash the whole of Europe. The world must die so that a new and better world may come forth, reincarnated on a higher plane."

Nikolay looked at me with the wide, staring eyes of a fanatic. I knew that he was a Buddhist, as were Baron Ungern and some three hundred of the others around them, but I found it hard to imagine that they would go so far, even in dreams. I was frightened; I felt I was lunching with a maniac. I had no idea what to answer, so I made some remark to the effect that the world was sick, indeed; that a blood transfusion seemed necessary; that it was certainly warm to-day; and that I should be forever obliged to Nikolay if he would provide me with a pass to Manchuria through one-third of the future empire. I did not refuse, nor did I agree, to join their great army and follow the modern Tamerlaine. I simply said that I wanted to see my parents first. I explained that I was one of the rare survivals in the rotten world that still believed in a mother and father. Nikolay understood my feelings and agreed to send me the pass. As I bade him good-bye, he said significantly: "I shall see you soon. There is much to do. Hurry back!"

When the train left the station I crossed myself. I was so glad to leave Chita. There was an undertone of uncertainty among the passengers, however, as no one was sure of the treatment that could be expected from the enterprising "patriots" in Transbaikalia; especially around Dauria where the "viceroy," Baron Ungern, ruled as an absolute monarch.

My companion in the compartment was a disabled

Amur Cossack officer who was going home to some far eastern province in Siberia. He was sick, disappointed and annoyed with the rest of the world. I recognized his feelings and did not bother him with my conversation. I took the upper berth, undressed, and began to read an old issue of a magazine I had brought along. The soft rocking of the train made me sleepy and from time to time I interrupted my reading with restful dreams. How wonderfully fast the train moved, how soft the bed was, how clean the air! And what quietness! For a whole day I did not leave my bed; reading and sleeping, sleeping and reading—forever in a state of lazy drowsiness.

Hunger awakened me. My companion was sitting by the window gazing with indifferent eyes at the flat and empty scene beyond the moving windows. He apparently appreciated the modesty that I had displayed and now greeted me with some consideration. We moved toward the dining car and I found that our train was crowded with civilians who were fleeing from the Bolsheviks. Among them one could easily distinguish the speculators who always found a way to profit, whether in time of prosperity or of adversity. Public calamity, in fact, brought them their greatest dividends. One could not help despising them.

We were approaching Dauria, a small town, close to the Manchurian border. I had gone through it several times before without paying it the slightest attention, so hopelessly flat and miserable it had appeared. Situated in a dead plain, it is surrounded by small sandy hills, and consists of a score of dirty huts spread over the naked hills. A small church rears its spire, and in the middle of the valley sprawls a fort. The fort is constructed of red bricks, and from the distance looks like a dirty slaughterhouse painted with blood. This was the headquarters of Baron Ungern.

Our train was met by a platoon of the baron's men. Guards were stationed at all the doors, and groups of soldiers entered and went through the cars. A dead silence descended; the train seemed paralysed with horror. Even the locomotive, one felt, had stopped breathing out of fear. The "patriots" were very polite and made their way along, inspecting passports. They even saluted the officers in the train, and apologized to my companion and myself for intruding. Everything was orderly and disappointing. We had expected an attack from bandits; instead, we met with the refined politeness of a drawing-room.

The only unusual thing that I could see was a small group of civilians, for the most part the speculating jackals, being lined up on the platform under a close guard. They were marched off in formation toward the fort in the valley. The train started, and soon gained full speed. In an hour or two we should be in Manchuria and the nightmare would be over. I returned to my seat and spoke to my companion:

"Why do people speak so much of Dauria? It certainly wasn't impressive; a few speculators were arrested, that is all."

The Cossack officer looked at me with astonishment. For a moment he did not answer; then when he spoke there was broad sarcasm in his voice.

"Why, of course, it is all a lie about Dauria, and about Baron Ungern too. Just a few men who happen to have money are arrested and their property taken for the military fund. All done, one must remember, for purposes that are purely patriotic. Without any preliminary investigation, these men are taken to a prison where there isn't a chance of finding an attorney to defend them."

It was my turn to look astonished.

"What do you mean?" I asked in surprise.

"To-night the soldiers of Commandant Sipailov

will go into the prison, tie the prisoners, load them one on top of the other, like cargo, into wagons, and haul them into the mountains. According to the playful humour of the soldiers, they will be killed, either by shooting in the back or by being spitted upon bayonets and swords. In Dauria, death is looked upon as a dear friend, who, if he will but come, relieves one of unbearable horror and torture."

"Is it possible . . . ?"

"Everything is possible now, during this revolution. Ataman Semenov is afraid of Baron von Ungern-Sternberg, for he possesses the only real military power upon which that adventurer can build his career as a sovereign ruler. He has surrounded himself with the same type of adventurers grasping for wealth, greedy for decorations, ranks and titles. It is only natural that they take advantage of the lawlessness of the country in order to further their personal purposes."

Here I interrupted the Cossack, saying that, although I had no reason to doubt his views, still it might be that his observations were rather premature. He brushed my objections aside and continued :

"Once a killer plunges his knife into his victim's heart, your observation ends. You don't have to observe him doing it over and over again ; to follow him from victim to victim. Well, I lived in Chita for several months, and I tell you that those men are killing the last hope of recovery for Russia. They desecrate the name of army officer to such an extent that it soon will be a synonym for murderer or pirate. Baron Ungern is a pirate ; he has good experience for it. Have you seen that gang of racketeers in Chita ? They all use narcotics : morphine, cocaine and alcohol. They torture Communists and their other prisoners because it gives them pleasure ; they are eager, all of them, to be executioners. Through atrocities they gain recognition and favour from their superiors and are granted decorations and promotion. They use the

military prisons, regimental stables, and armoured trains as a means of political as well as personal revenge and enrichment."

I remarked that it was dangerous, then, for a man to attempt the crossing of Transbaikalia with money.

"You are right, but not nearly so dangerous as it is for a pretty girl to try to cross."

"But, colonel, I do not understand how they can get away with such outrages. It is too hideous to imagine."

"Who is going to stop them? There is a revolution, is there not? No faction has sufficient military strength to come here and clean out the filth of this place. But have patience, my dear captain, have patience. The time will come when we'll come back, you and I and a thousand other true Russians, who will fight all that is devouring our motherland."

There was so much of anguish and despair in the voice of the colonel that I realized I was touching a sore spot. The downfall of the Russian Empire and the desertion of the army from the still active front had severely wounded the pride and the patriotism of the old man. Suddenly I realized that only in blood, rivers of blood, could men like this colonel seek relief from the torture of their consciousness. They had said so many farewells at the beginning of the revolution; certainly they would make someone pay dearly for the bitterness of their disappointments.

The day was dying, and the red glow of sunset filled our compartment with an ominous light. The Cossack officer sat in the corner leaning back against the pillows. With an abstracted look he watched the bluish veil of smoke rise from his cigarette, and it was easy to see how far he had gone in his bitter thoughts. His face, his hands, his uniform were bathed in the red of the sunset. "Rivers of blood" flashed through my mind and I felt a cold shiver down my spine.

3

The last car of the International Express had left Siberia and delivered us in Manchuria. I sighed with relief, realizing that the ravaging fires of the Russian revolution were now behind me. I was no exception; the other passengers, like school children, openly displayed their joy. Without ceremony, they congratulated one another upon their good fortune in effecting their escape. Many new friendships were cemented by noisy toasts, and many engagements made to celebrate the great event properly when our destinations were reached.

The train still plunged through the ancient and mysterious Barga, of which we had already covered over a hundred miles in Siberia. But there was something new and indefinable about those soft, hilly prairies covered with a thin layer of early winter snow. There were no ugly military barracks; no troops to be seen here. The land would have seemed deserted had it not been for the herds of cattle, sheep and horses still feeding in the pastures where the wind scattered the snow. In the distance a caravan of camels headed for the tiny railroad station. It was like the scene disclosed when the curtain rises upon the prologue of a long-forgotten Oriental fairy tale.

I knew comparatively little of this hinterland country, for my youthful studies had been confined to China proper. I turned to my more mature companion for information, hoping to kill some of the time of our long journey in further conversation. He adjusted a pillow under his elbow and answered slowly and thoughtfully.

"Yes, it is a good country. Here I began my life, spent my best years, my young years. It was here that my career began in the Argun regiment. We used to go up the Argun River—as far as the Lake

Dalai Nor, into which the Kerulen River spills itself. It was there that we purchased our horses and cattle. Many a night we spent in the open under the bright skies of Mongolia; many a tale was told around the fires, of the centuries long gone. Yes, yes . . . but that was in my other life, my happy life. It's all in the past now, dead. I have been reincarnated into another being, destined to fulfil this terrible existence, as the great Buddha teaches."

The colonel stopped here, with his customary sarcastic smile, and took a heavy silver cigarette case from his pocket. He lighted a long Russian cigarette and, as the transparent bluish smoke drifted lazily toward the ceiling, he continued:

"This is the cradle from which Genghis Khan sprang. It is from here that he determined to set up an empire which spread from the Pacific to the Danube, and from the Indian Ocean to the Arctic. Once upon a time, the Barga, with its fertile lands, cradled one of the mightiest of his armies. Frederick the Second of Germany, Henry the Third of England, and even the mighty Pope humbled themselves before the 'Ruler of the Earth' in mortal terror lest the Mongol wipe them from the face of the earth. Fortunately for them, the mountainous west did not hold the lure of the spacious plains of Eastern Europe, so essential for the huge herds of cattle and horses that the Asiatics brought with them. So they settled in Russia . . . like locusts. And of the filthy hordes of warriors the great khan sent westward there remain to-day only miserable peddlers and good cooks."

The colonel turned lazily toward the window and looked out.

"You see that caravan? Last night it slept at Dalai Nor, a lake where birds cover the skies like clouds and where the fishes are so abundant they have to ride on each other's backs. Two or three nights ago those nomads camped at Bor Nor, a still

larger lake. There they saw the well-preserved baths where a thousand years ago the Chinese mandarins and the Mongol chieftains used to come to cure their ills in the mineral waters. All this land is rich in memories of the past. Some say that Genghis Khan was born in one place and some in another. We know only that it was somewhere between the Kerulen and Onon rivers, which are found to the south-east of Lake Baikal. But the legends of the Buriats maintain that the Ruler of All Men was born in the eastern fastness of the Baikal Mountains, which is in Siberia. When he died, the earth shook in convulsions and swallowed his body. Many mineral springs around filled the cavity, and thus Lake Baikal was formed."

The colonel's interest and energy faded as suddenly as they had arisen. He readjusted his seat, pulled another cushion under his elbow and returned to his magazine.

Now the train was approaching a station. A bright, variegated, noisy mass of humanity crowded the platform. The blue, lean figures of Chinese mingled with the stout, broad-boned Mongols in their red or yellow garb. Russians in high boots and short blouses conversed busily with different groups of Orientals who had brought their goods to trade. Herds of cattle were massed in the corrals; hundreds of camels were lying on the ground to allow their owners to unpack their burdens, and shabby, long-haired ponies with high saddles followed their masters along the street like faithful dogs. A couple of automobiles parked at the doors of the most imposing business houses emphasized cruelly the backwardness of their Oriental setting.

This was but a small station, and as soon as the mail had been exchanged the train sped away again. In half an hour we passed Dzalainor, a rich but badly developed coal-mining district, and then began the

gradual climb up the western slope of the Great Khingan mountain range. The hilly country was sparsely inhabited by nomads, and now and then we would see cattle and sheep in the secluded hollows among the hills.

The train soon reached the somewhat larger station at Hailar. This was a terminal of the great caravan road which ran from Urga, the capital of Mongolia, to Manchuria. Another hundred miles and we had reached the summit of the Khingan. Then the descent in sharp zigzags, curves and almost complete loops toward the immense valley where the agricultural centre of Manchuria spread between the ancient city of Tsitsihar and Harbin on the Sungari River.

We went into the dining-car and took our seats at a vacant table. While our order was being carried out we watched the crowd at the platform of the station where the train had now stopped. It was Buhedu, famous among the hunting grounds in Manchuria for the flocks of migratory game that crossed the many secluded little basins lying in the low surrounding hills. During the hunting season many sportsmen assembled here for the geese, ducks and pheasants; others for deer, wild boars or even tiger. But now the season was nearly at an end, there were but few hunters left. These could be easily recognized in the crowd of new passengers who boarded the train. In heavy coats, with imposing bandoliers of ammunition hanging from their shoulders, they directed the placing of their dogs in the baggage cars. Porters followed some of them carrying many geese and ducks to the refrigerator car, and other porters bore the loads of luggage to the compartments.

The station bell tolled three times; the signal in Russia that the train is about to depart. The locomotive sounded its hoarse whistle, which was caught up and repeated by the mountain echoes. The train moved slowly, the station buildings disappeared, and

the little town sank suddenly into nothingness, so dark were the narrow valleys. Outside the windows only the silence remained, vast and fathomless as before.

When we returned to our compartment, the colonel lit one of his endless cigarettes and puffed the fragrant smoke in silence for some time. Then suddenly he began one of his stories. Apparently he felt a strong impulse to cast off some of his troubled thoughts, thinking perhaps it would bring relief from loneliness and sorrow.

He spoke of Siberia, to which his ancestors had come at the close of the sixteenth century. They had been members of a small group of some five hundred Cossacks, with which Yermak conquered that vast country. Although I had read about this daring Yermak, I was delighted to hear the story again from a man whose people had played a part in it.

Upon the eastern borderline of the empire of John the Terrible there once lived a rich and powerful family of merchants named Strogonov. They were granted the privilege of free trade and in return they assumed the duty of protecting the vulnerable and distant outpost from the attacks of the Asiatics. They maintained their own army—outcasts, adventurers, daredevils all of them. Now, the name "Strogonov" means slashed, chopped or dissected, and that is exactly what had happened to a member of the family a century before at the hands of the Orientals.

During this time the south of Russia was filled with all kinds of desperate people who had run away from the terrorism of the tsar. They had united into groups and taken the name of Cossacks. They were free and desperate warriors. The most famous of their leaders was named Yermak. He had caused John the Terrible so much trouble that he was proscribed, declared an outcast to be hanged upon capture.

It was natural that Strogonov should invite this Yermak to become the leader of his army. Theirs would make a mighty combination, tremendous riches married so happily to daring valour.

It had been known, as early as the fifth century before Christ, through the writings of Herodotus, that Siberia possessed fabulous treasures of gold and precious stones. Inevitably an expedition was organized by Strogonov to conquer the capital of the country beyond the "Stone Belt," which to-day is called the Ural. This capital bore the name of Siberia.

Yermak welcomed the new adventure, drawn by its magnitude and its danger. With five hundred and forty of his men, he crossed the mountains and smashed his way to the Ob River. The Asiatics found their arrows useless against the muskets and artillery that Yermak threw against them.

With the gift of Siberia to the tsar, Yermak not only purchased the forgiveness of all his sins, but also gained the title of first prince of Siberia with full powers of sovereignty over the country. In order to visualize the magnitude of this "gift" to the tsar, let us try a comparison: The area of Germany is about 180,000 square miles; the area of Siberia is about 5,000,000 square miles. Truly Yermak's had been a successful crusade.

As a special sign of his benevolence, John the Terrible sent Yermak a silver hauberk, or a body armour in the form of a coat, with an eagle of pure gold upon the chest. This wonderful chainmail was the cause of Yermak's death. Once, with just a small group of his Cossacks, he was attacked by the Tartars while he was asleep. All were killed but Yermak who fought alone. Gallantry was not enough in the face of such terrific odds, and he was forced to retreat inch by inch until he reached the banks of the Irtysh River. He plunged into the stream, but the heavy armour prevented his swimming and

he sank to the bottom. But as Genghis Khan conquered Russia, so Yermak humiliated the motherland of the powerful hordes of that "Ruler of the Earth," giving great and unending satisfaction to all Russian patriots that lived, or ever will live.

As I listened to the colonel's story, I forgot his incongruous appearance. He was taller than the average man, but very thin, especially in the waist, which was out of proportion to his broad shoulders. His hair was as black as a southerner's, with that bluish reflection that characterizes the people of the Caucasus, but his face was as pale as any man's from the northern steppes. He had an artificial leg and he would slap its leather side and declare that he could still sit a horse with the best of them. One ear had fallen prey to an enemy sabre, and in the other he wore a small earring, as is the custom among the Cossacks. Although he was of pure Russian blood, he resembled, to some slight degree, the Semitic peoples of the far southland. He had once, no doubt, been elegant, but now he moved with a lurching awkwardness. He hated women with the bitter hatred of a man who has lost all hope of winning them. There was an excited sarcastic tone in his speech, and he had adopted an acid, ironic attitude toward everything.

About forty miles from Harbin our express met another train. It is customary in Russia for one to meet friends coming on a train at a near-by station and to ride the remainder of their journey with them. However, I was surprised when someone knocked at our compartment door and I saw my brother Alexander standing in the doorway.

I had lost two brothers in the war, but Alexander, by some miracle, had survived three years of battle. It was good to see him.

"Greetings to the dreamer," he exclaimed, and

kissed my cheeks. "Father has sent me to welcome you home," Then he noticed the colonel and saluted him most formally. I presented Alexander and he joined me in insisting that my companion should stay with us while he was in Harbin.

We became so excited at seeing each other, and talked so much, that we did not notice that we had approached the bridge across the broad Sungari River on the outskirts of Harbin. We had barely time enough to pack our belongings before the train pulled into the station in the early evening. Tardy with our packing, we were the last to leave the train before it departed eastward toward Vladivostok. The cabs were all taken and we had no alternative but to take rickshas. The coolies lifted the poles, then lunged forward and began to run in their rhythmic manner, one after another, up the low hill which separates the administrative centre from the business district.

No matter how European an Oriental city may proudly consider itself in the daytime, nor how much it may look like it, when evening descends and the business life fades away, the pulse of the Orient becomes dominant. The clamour of the throngs in the streets vibrates in the stillness of the evening. The night comes to life and the streets seem narrower, the crowds better dressed and the surroundings more unusual and even fantastic in the dim lights of a myriad bright lanterns.

The Asiatic soon forgets the hard toil of the day and enjoys the leisure of the night. Some ride donkeys upon wide flat saddles while the owner of the donkey runs behind; others of more means ride in rickshas and the cream of society proudly sit in their horse-drawn carriages. The night is clamorous with bells as the cab drivers over and over again press their warning signals, which sound like huge alarm clocks.

Our rickshas reached the top of a low hill and I

looked below. The large and scattered harbour shone with a multitude of lights, and beyond the railroad track to our right we saw a red reflection upon the dark sky. This was Fu Dzya Dyan, where over a million Chinese now lived. But two decades before, Fu Dyza Dyan had been a small village inhabited by a few poor fishermen. Then the railroad had come and with it coolies, merchants, adventurers, businessmen and promoters, and Fu Dzya Dyan grew to join the other little village upon the hills called "Harbin" to make a metropolis of the Far East with a population of a million and a half.

My home was on the shore of a small pond near the railroad bridge over the Sungari. A great grove hid the house, stables, a winter garden and a number of other structures of our well-established homestead. The solid granite house was well lighted, but, as we drew near, only a few lights penetrated through the trees and bushes to intimate that a warm welcome was awaiting us. The barking of a Great Dane was the first sign of our home-coming; then our old Hindu watchman opened the gate and the rickshas entered the yard. The runners had pulled us for forty minutes and were breathing heavily. Streams of perspiration ran down their faces and disappeared into the collars of their gowns. From habit they begged for bigger tips, and, receiving them, disappeared smiling into the darkness of the narrow lanes.

My favourite dog bounded toward me and, standing with his front paws upon my shoulders, braced himself hugely against me, until I had sufficiently acknowledged his greeting. Then, holding him by the collar, I approached the entrance to the house through the garden alive with the colour of many lamps. A Chinese servant in white opened the door and there in the hall my mother and father stood waiting for me.

I found my parents considerably aged. My mother, barely fifty, was silvery white, and my father bent

and tired. Two of their sons had died for the glory of Russia, and they had lived in mortal fear that the other two would not return. Now that we were actually here, they watched us with happy smiles and wet eyes.

4

A few days later some of our army friends invited us to inspect an armoured train that they were preparing for battle against the Bolsheviks. I was particularly interested in the small carriage designed to carry four persons. This vehicle was to run in front of the armoured train and inspect the track, removing the mines placed there by the enemy. The theory was that at worst it would be blown up before any damage could be done to the valuable train. We discussed the prospects avidly and it was discovered that among the crew of sixty I was the only one who had any knowledge of motors. It was taken for granted that I should enlist and I was assigned the duty of taking charge of the little decoy car that scouted on ahead looking for trouble—and annihilation.

The toiling masses, during the winter of 1917, had been busy settling their accounts with their landlords. By the following spring they were launched on the project of constructing a new state. Meanwhile some of the more fortunate members of the aristocracy, wealthy bourgeoisie, and officers of the army had escaped from the clutches of the revolutionists and had fled to the outskirts of the empire. Gradually they formed fighting units and prepared to march against the Communists.

Among these belated "restorers of Russia" were a few who had chosen Manchuria as their rallying point. They possessed great differences in ability, quality and scope. A Colonel Orlov was the first in the field

and he was accordingly unhampered by competition in the display of his initiative. He got no further than dressing his hundred adherents in astonishingly bright uniforms. At one time the city of Harbin thought it had been invaded by an army of doormen and porters from the capitals of Europe.

Then out of a clear sky another gentleman, a general named Horvat, issued a "manifesto," proclaiming himself "Ruler of All the Russias." He retained common sense enough, however, to add the soothing words, "pending the meeting of the constitutional assembly." The eyes of the world turned toward Harbin and the city owed Horvat its place in the journalistic sun. But the embarrassment of the international diplomats was great when they failed to find the capital of the "ruler" on the map. Horvat was unable to govern Russia from Harbin, which was upon Chinese soil, so he named an obscure village called Grodekovo, which was about thirty miles from the eastern border. One wonders why he did not choose Vladivostok or Kharbarovsk, both large and important cities in the Far East. The answer probably lies in the fact that they would have been too dangerous for a man who might have to move fast. Even so, Horvat did not enter Grodekovo, preferring the alien and safer soil of Manchuria. He seemed to dislike his "subjects," to feel that they were too uncertain and risky, especially now that they had decided to govern themselves. But Grodekovo was a convenient capital for a man holding two jobs such as Horvat, who in addition to being Ruler of All the Russias, was also manager of the Chinese Eastern Railway.

Horvat had a decided advantage over his competitor, Orlov. He commanded the remains of the army corps stationed along the fifteen hundred miles of the Chinese Eastern Railway, of which he had been manager for two decades; he had the treasury of the road with a substantial daily income at his command, and he also

acquired, with no questions asked, the immediate loyalty of over twenty thousand employees.

Aside from a few who had personal ambitions, most of the Russians in Harbin liked this old man, to whom they gave the nickname of "Grandpa." Tall and heavy-set, with a magnificent silver-white beard that flowed to his waistline, he was a familiar, if somewhat imposing, figure.

Under the supervision of the military engineers the construction of our armoured train progressed slowly. It proved a harder task than had seemed in the beginning. It was comparatively easy to convert a long American freight train into a veritable fortress, but it was harder to obtain the steel to provide shutters for the guns, towers and solid foundations for the heavy pieces of artillery. However, the train was eventually made ready, and we were ordered to recapture Horvat's "capital," Grodekovo, which had recently fallen into the hands of Bolsheviks.

It was not without a tragi-comic incident that we reached the Russian border. At Pogranichnaya station the Chinese customs house, which employed mostly Englishmen, wanted to go through its regular routine of inspecting all trains passing in and out of China. Our law-abiding commander consented. Now, most of the officers and men were at the station restaurant, and only a crew of guards under my command remained inside the armoured cars. We felt indignant at the thought that a Russian war machine should be inspected by foreigners. Accordingly, I ordered all steel shutters closed, doors locked, and men posted at guns. Thus, we started a revolution of our own, and threatened to open fire at anyone who dared approach us within a disrespectful distance. The Englishmen immediately disappeared, and it took a good deal of talking before we admitted even our commander inside the train.

It is characteristic of the times that I was not court-martialled. On the contrary, the commander understood my motives and, yielding to the general approval of my action by all the officers of the train, he dropped the affair as an insignificant incident.

At the border we detached the living quarters from the rest of the train, and the men entered the armoured cars. The shutters were closed, and only little spaces were left open for the artillery and machine guns. The officers climbed into their commanding towers, and we slowly rolled into Russia, our little scouting car in the lead. We expected to find mines along the tracks and some five miles from the border we sighted the first explosives and removed them. Proceeding round a curve, we were suddenly confronted with a huge boulder. We signalled the train to stop but were late ourselves with the brakes. There was nothing for it but to jump off the car before it ran into the rock and smashed itself to pieces. The petrol tank exploded and set on fire what remained of the vehicle. With great difficulty we succeeded in removing the boulder and the smouldering ruins of our scout-car, and climbing back into the train, dashed in a rage toward Grodekovo.

The peaceful countryside spread before us in the chaste whiteness of an early winter morning. Fluffy dunes of snow rolled like an endless desert to the horizon, with a few dark oases of naked trees scattered here and there. In the hazy distance, we saw a small village. It was almost buried in the dunes, and if it had not been for the smoke rising from the several chimneys we might not have noticed it. In its utter detachment and remoteness the village seemed unreal, as though it had been taken out of a child's book of native folklore and dropped there by happy accident.

The dream was roughly broken by the sudden appearance of an old man. He ran in a great hurry along the railroad track toward our train, desperately

waving his coat for us to stop. We no sooner noticed him than four other men jumped from their hiding place and madly dashed into small bushes growing near by. Presently deafening explosions shook the earth, tearing the steel rails from their moorings and tossing the wooden ties high into the air. Fortunately we were able to stop the train in time to escape being blown up with the roadbed. Our men dashed out in pursuit of the enemy scouts. The bullets found their victims soon enough. But our men were so infuriated that they smashed the heads of the dead with their rifle butts until nothing remained but a bloody pulp of what had been a human face. However, this did not prevent the old man from recognizing his grandson among the dead, and silently he wept as he embraced the remains of his beloved boy. I could not reconcile the situation and stood dumbfounded at the pathetic picture; the aged man had saved us from destruction, and his own grandson had sacrificed his life to save Grodekovo from invasion by an unmerciful enemy. "Perhaps it is because both of them were Russians," I thought in perplexity.

Our train was provided with the necessary equipment for repairing minor damages; but we were unable to lay down fresh railroad tracks on a damaged roadbed. We were forced to go back to Manchuria without carrying out our task.

So ended the affair of the armoured train. My brother and I did not know what to do next, but our father, as usual, came to the rescue. Through his influence he was able to arrange the appointment of Alexander to a gendarme corps, and of myself to a position as an adjutant to General Ivanov, commandant of the city of Harbin.

My brother's work was most interesting. He was supposed to gather information about the Japanese, with special reference to their activities in Manchuria

and Siberia. As a former student of the consular school at Vladivostok, he was well qualified for the task. Most of his information he compiled from different reports of his fieldmen, voluminous correspondence and careful studies of Japanese periodicals and newspapers. As we know now, Japan's ambition was to slice off a good portion of eastern Siberia, which scheme it justified on the ground that our "allies" were similarly engaged in European Russia.

As to my new occupation, it was peculiar, to say the least. In addition to many other and quite important duties, the commandant was vested with authority to supervise the behaviour of all the troops stationed in his city. To assist him in his duties, he delegated his authority to his three adjutants, whose job it was to roam about the town and watch what was going on. Each had a detachment of soldiers for emergencies. The adjutants were given a free hand to impose penalties, including imprisonment, for transgressing against military regulations. It was a quite honorary and leisurely occupation when nothing happened, but it could be ugly and brutal when something went wrong. All in all, as I recall it now, those several months with General Ivanov were the worst of my military experiences.

My "working" day fell into regular routine: Sleepy and tired, I would get up a little before noon. At twelve o'clock we had to sign an "order book" at the office, wherein all new instructions were written daily. I considered this a nuisance, and soon arranged for my orderly to sign my name for me, and report to me briefly, very briefly, the most interesting or important orders, while serving my breakfast in bed. When sufficiently rested from my previous night's affairs, I would go downtown and lazily stroll along the streets. Here and there, as my fancy dictated, I would stop a soldier, inspect his "leave of absence," correct his way of wearing a cap, or scold him for badly polished

buttons. I would watch to see if all military men were saluting each other, and, if they did, whether they did so correctly. Sometimes I would stop even an officer, and inquire his reasons for wearing a cavalry sword when he was an officer of infantry. Soon I developed an impudent and hostile attitude toward all military men, and it became a pleasure for me to humiliate them in public. I was amply rewarded with their hatred, which merely added a new zest to life for me.

The night life in Harbin was devoid of all pretence of modesty and temperance. Most of the military were Cossacks, from either Transbaikalia or Ussuri, and the rest of them were just desperate characters thrown by the revolution into Manchuria. While waiting to be organized into fighting units and to advance against the Communists, they lost themselves in a fog of wine and gaiety. When drunk, and they almost always were, they became Harbin's public enemies at large. They would challenge and ill-treat the civilian population right and left, blindly accusing it of their personal misfortunes in particular and the downfall of the Russian Empire in general. They were the heroes who had shed their blood for the motherland while the civilians had stayed at home and enriched themselves.

The differences of these hostile camps, military and civilian, we adjutants were called upon to reconcile daily. It was natural that the military were always the attackers and, therefore, it was also natural that the adjutants had to suppress the military first. The civilians felt that we were on their side, and consequently we were admitted free and welcomed to all clubs, theatres and cabarets. Exclusive food and wines and the best seats were provided for us, also free. But we had been brought up to expect such things as a matter of course, and we treated our hosts with ill-concealed contempt.

These days and nights of continuous gaiety and nervous tension ended quite abruptly. My last evening, as I recall, was spent in a desperate effort to entertain two charming ladies, the appointments with whom I had badly mixed. The ladies were different, and the places were different, but the hour was the same. I had a cocktail with the first when my orderly called me on the telephone. So I apologized for being called to "headquarters on business," dashed to another girl, had another cocktail, had one more call from "headquarters," left the second girl and returned to the first. I was very busy that evening. We were all quite tired at the end of the affair and disliked one another so much that we never met again.

Disgusted with the world, I went to the opera house, where I met my brother Alexander. But neither of us liked the performance, and Alexander suggested that we should go to hear a new chanteuse, who had just arrived at one of the fashionable night clubs. At the entrance to the place we found some commotion. A young lieutenant had brought his uncle to show him the big world. Both were drunk and the officer was very disagreeable. I saluted him formally and said:

"Permit me to introduce myself. I am the adjutant of the commandant. By his name and authority I call you to order."

"To hell with him," replied the lieutenant.

I slowly pulled on my gloves and stood coolly buttoning them as a signal for my guards to be ready.

"I am extremely sorry to declare you under arrest," I said, grabbing his gun from the holster. The guards threw a rope over his shoulders, and before he realized what was happening, he was in a cab tightly squeezed between two husky soldiers who hustled him off to headquarters and a night in a dark cell.

Suddenly the forgotten uncle came to his senses and lunged at me. Under no circumstances would I have wasted my time on civilians. At first I was

simply dumbfounded at his outrageous behaviour. "A rat," I thought in indignation and, smiling a bad smile, said:

"Evidently you, too, need a lesson. How is this to start with?" and dealt him a blow across the mouth. I turned and leisurely entered the building while a gendarme dragged him into the patrol car.

My brother looked at me with disgust, but I tried to pass off the incident lightly. "This is the entrance fee that I quite often have to pay."

The owner of the place appeared on the scene and quite humbly led the way to the commandant's private box.

"Champagne?" he inquired. "Or will you have supper first? I have just received some excellent French cognac."

"Everything in order here?" I asked.

"Most certainly, my good adjutant, but it is too early to judge yet."

"Very well, send us something light to eat then . . . and a bottle of good brandy."

Alexander smiled again and we removed our sabres and stood them in the corner.

"Look down there," he said, pointing to the main floor where a number of tables were arranged in a circle in front of the stage. A company of four or five army officers were having supper and were quite far gone in their drinking. One of them was cutting bread with his sword to the amusement of his companions.

"Well, the evening may become interesting," I said. "I will have to stop them if they get too boisterous."

"You can count on me," said Alexander.

Just then one of the heroes below pulled his gun and commenced breaking the light globes with well-aimed shots.

"Come on," I shouted. "Call the platoon on duty

and then stay below near the cloakroom. Hurry before they kill someone."

Racing down the steps, I advanced into the hall. I pretended to be very drunk and, as I reached the company, I shouted boastfully:

"Globes? That's easy. I can show you a better trick, fellows. Can you shoot against the blade of your sword so that the bullet will be cut in half? Come on, I'll show you."

They welcomed me with a great laugh and agreed to move into the poolroom where the light was better for shooting. Alex followed the crowd at a distance.

As soon as we entered the spacious room and the door was closed, I pulled my gun and shouted:

"Line up along that wall, you dirty swine, and keep your hands up. Alex, come in!"

The officers suddenly became sober. Alexander took their weapons while I stood with a pointed gun in my hand. In ten minutes the patrol car arrived with a platoon of the guard and took the revellers to the military prison.

The patrons of the place ignored the incident; so many of them happened in the city each night that they had become accustomed to them. Just as we had returned to our seats and the performance was commencing I received a call from another adjutant who was having difficulty with a colonel. This officer had demanded, as a Knight of St. George, that he be granted the honour of a military band to escort him to the commandant's office under arrest. Though he was, according to tradition, entitled to this honour, there was no military band available at that time of night, and my fellow adjutant called upon me for assistance and advice.

"Don't get him angry or excited," I said. "I will come over." I apologized to my brother and, after promising to return in half an hour, I left the Boyard.

In the bright hall of the lavish Commercial Club,

I found a group of amused spectators watching a formal encounter of two military men. One, an adjutant, was trying to arrest the other for misconduct and was finding himself unable to do it. The other, a colonel, was sitting placidly in a comfortable chair sipping a tall glass of brandy. He was short and very broad. His dark complexion, high cheekbones and sharp, black eyes betrayed unmistakably his Tartar origin. Whenever he spoke, his white teeth flashed like steel. There was something glorious about this proud and reserved figure. His wartime uniform, of the Transbaikalian Cossacks, was of excellent material and had been cut by an artist. His manners had the polish of a highly bred cat. I have had the same feeling only once since: when looking at a tiger behind the bars of a cage in the zoo.

I measured him from the distance, then advanced in the most formal military fashion, hands held stiffly at my sides. I saluted, then stared straight forward as a common soldier would stand when facing a general.

"General Ivanov, the commandant of the city, has commanded me to present his compliments and express his pleasure at having you in the city. He reveres the many deeds you have performed in the war and is awaiting you in his office where he is looking forward to the honour of a visit from you." I looked straight into the eyes of the man I was arresting. He smiled, but remained motionless. Both of us waited for the other to make a move. Then, suddenly, as if he understood, he rose to his feet and took my arm.

"Fine, young man, I'll be glad to go."

When we were outside I ordered a private cab, dismissed the guards, and started for headquarters. The colonel threw one arm over my shoulder.

"I know that General Ivanov is not at his office at this time of the night, and that you have merely arrested me without the customary fuss and feathers. You saved my face and did your duty properly,

young man. How would you like to be my adjutant ? ”

He proved to be in command of a Mongolian division of the army under Baron Ungern in Transbaikalia. Inasmuch as we had no right to send the colonel to headquarters to sleep on a rough bed until his trial in the morning, we agreed to spend the rest of the night at the Boyard, after which we would report to the general together. However, at the Boyard, we met our friends and separated, dropping the affair entirely.

By good luck I ran into my beloved uncle Pavel as I was on my way home. His company was always refreshing. We drove to the river where we had a wonderful plunge into the cool waters of the Sungari. The day was just awakening and a mist hovered over the calm river. Around the bend wild ducks were calling each other, and here and there we could see the fish play. We swam for about an hour, and at last lay down to rest on the opposite shore. The grass was soft and cool with dew ; all about us hovered the sweet aroma of wild flowers.

Presently I rose on my elbow and looked at the majestic river. In the misty distance two Chinese fishermen were casting their lines from long and narrow log boats. They wore wide straw hats that protected not only their heads but their whole bodies from the sun. They smoked long, dark pipes and were as silent as Chinese silhouette pictures.

After the noisy night the peaceful surroundings of the enchanting morning impressed me as a paradise.

My uncle sat up and embraced his knees. After a few minutes of silence, he uttered one of his typical absent-minded phrases : “ The farther away we get from man, the more beautiful the world becomes.” He rose to his feet and added : “ Let’s call those fishermen to take us across the river. I have to hurry. Much nuisance awaits my attention in the office to-day.”

The Chinese noticed my signals and, abandoning their work, directed the boats toward us. In about fifteen minutes they reached our shore and with naïve smiles helped us into their treacherous craft, so small that we had to take separate boats in order to be safe. Only the splashing of the paddles in the water could be heard as we journeyed back across the river. It was so quiet that I slipped into a pleasant sleep.

When we had put on our clothes we went to the Yacht Club. As we began our breakfast on the open veranda a crowd of cabaret girls, accompanied by splendidly attired young gentlemen, arrived and took a place in another corner. They were drunk and noisy. We hurried our meal and left the place in disgust. Uncle took a cab to his office and I went home.

After dinner that day my father called me into his study. He closed the door, pulled his chair closer to a fireplace, lighted his pipe and after some silence said :

"My son, I do not like the way things are going with you, and I do not think that you do. I have arranged to have your resignation from the army accepted and I have also arranged for your enrolment in the service of the American Expeditionary Force, for the time being at least. With your knowledge of the languages and the local situation both in the Orient and in Siberia, you will be valuable for the Russian cause among our American friends. Take this letter from the American consul to General Graves and this ticket to Vladivostok. Your bags have been carefully packed by your mother, and you leave on the next train."

I was barely turned twenty, and did not resent the fact that somebody else was taking charge of my affairs. As a matter of fact, I had been expecting for a long time that my father would object to the kind of life I was leading. I looked into his tired, thoughtful eyes, and I thought : "God bless you, father."

PART II

WITH GRAVES AND KOLCHAK IN SIBERIA

I

AFTER the revolution Siberia became a vast stage peopled by amateur actors, the self-invited interventionist forces that had been sent, presumably, to "save" Russia from the Bolsheviks. The roles they assumed were strange and they never learned them nor those of their immediate neighbours. As a result, the whole performance was one of great discord.

In the beginning the English, French, Japanese and Czechs were on the side of Kolchak, the counter-revolutionary leader, and the Americans, Canadians, Italians and Chinese were against him. Suddenly the Canadians declared they no longer wanted the thankless task of converting Russian sinners and abruptly withdrew from the country. The Japanese, in the meantime, had decided that the English and the French were taking too much of the initiative in what would naturally be a Japanese sphere of influence, and backed the cut-throat Semenov. He was placed in charge of Transbaikalia and controlled the only line of communication that Kolchak had with the outside world. Semenov was ordered by the Japanese to oppose Kolchak, and the French and English took it graciously and came to terms.

Meanwhile the Czechs, who had started the entire proceedings, took quantities of Russian ammunition—to say nothing of other useful articles, such as sewing machines, agricultural machinery and the like—and decided that there could be no better time to leave.

To carry out this policy they announced that they could no longer "be a party to a crime and could not, therefore, continue to support Kolchak."

Under such circumstances Kolchak could not have lasted long had not President Wilson come to his aid, not only with his powerful influence, but also with supplies of food, munitions and other sorely needed articles. It was at this time, for instance, that the American Red Cross sent over six hundred thousand pieces of underwear.

As I recall it now, it was General Foch who first advocated a crusade against revolutionary Russia. Certainly the crusade materialized and, as such, it was a failure.

Of course General Graves had to be blamed. He was the only commander who minded his own business and did not try to participate in the affairs of everyone else. Nor, to his honour, did he want to become a party to the partitioning of Russia. Being an honest soldier he could distinguish right from wrong, and he stood firmly for what he considered to be right, regardless of the subtle ethical interpretations of the diplomats. Every real Russian patriot will always remember with undying gratitude this modern knight who cherished the belief that right is more important than might.

My personal experiences with the American Expeditionary Force in Siberia took me to Vladivostok in the early days of September, 1918. I was attached to General Graves's staff as chief translator and had a detachment of ten men working under me.

General Graves's headquarters were situated in the imposing mansion of the Kunst and Albers Company. In keeping with the custom in Russia, all corporations or important partnerships maintained well-equipped dormitories for their employees and the great red-brick building had been a dormitory for this firm. As such it was ideally suited to the needs

of the American forces, for it could quarter many men. Its larger rooms—library, board-room and dining-hall—overlooked the bay. In these the offices were installed. The top floors were assigned to the officers and the basement fitted out for the detachment on duty. A wall map hung in our room where a constant, detailed study of the events in Siberia was conducted. Desks and filing-cabinets taxed the floor space to the limit.

My immediate superior was Colonel David Barrows. A learned man and a capable analyst of the tangled international situation, he was perfectly qualified for his position as head of the Intelligence Division. He had travelled all over the world, visiting remote places where the interplay of international interests was momentarily acute and, to my knowledge, he solved his country's problems many times in a most satisfactory manner. The general impression he gave was one of dynamic energy. He possessed an athletic figure and had a brisk but heavy walk.

His staff included representatives of many American universities. I can still remember the peculiar morning greeting of the expert on Japanese affairs. He was a tall man with bright red hair.

Each day he would push his cold fingers down into the back of my collar, adding a significant:

“Ugh . . . Siberian!”

Indeed, Siberia was a new country to the Americans. Some of them seemed never to have seen snow before. Like children, they would plunge their bare hands into the fluffy substance and press it against their faces. Some of them paid a heavy price in colds and fevers. The cold of Siberia is peculiar. Foreigners have never been able to stand it. More Japanese died from it than from Communist bullets. Yet the Russian considers Vladivostok a city blessed with a mild climate. In the interior, he will grant, it does get cold. The cold is so intense that the ground cracks into crevasses,

while in northern Siberia you must breathe through a scarf and wear coloured glasses or you will lose your nose and go blind.

One day a parade was arranged and a Cossack regiment was called in from Nikolsk, a town some sixty miles away. A snowstorm broke in the morning and the Allied commanders called off the parade. The Cossacks were in transit and could not be informed. Imagine the surprise of everyone when the cavalrymen appeared in parade formation coming down the main street of Vladivostok. Sometimes the storm would blow so much snow past them that everything would disappear. For a brief period the hazy silhouettes of men and horses would be visible once more, and then vanish again. The thing that most astonished my American friends was that the Cossacks were lustily singing their military songs as if there was nothing unusual about the weather. I admit there was probably a good deal of showmanship in this, but the Cossack doesn't seem to mind the cold very much.

There was one Cossack among the American officers. His name had been Boris Ignatiev, but he had changed it in his transformation from Cossack to American and he called himself Sam Johnson. He had the rank of a major and commanded the international police in Vladivostok. With his corporal, Makovich, he achieved the impossible time and again. I do not think any other man ever received so many military decorations as Major Johnson.

There were many real gentlemen among the American officers. I remember one, a Major Blond, a fat, cheerful man, who became a great friend of our family. He especially liked our samovar, not the silver one for formal occasions, but the bright red bronze one we employed every day. He used to say that the samovar created an atmosphere of sunny comfort and intimate friendliness. Accordingly, we kept him well

supplied with Russian tea, which, in our family, was mixed in certain proportion with jasmine blossoms.

In line with the policy stated in the *Aide Mémoire*, General Graves did his best to remain neutral. This neutrality was immediately interpreted by the Allies as an indication of unwillingness to co-operate and an admission that the American forces were furthering the cause of the revolution. The Allies pointed out that the Americans were fighting the Bolsheviks at Archangel, shoulder to shoulder with the English, while in Siberia they refused to lift a finger. There were instances where Graves had to refuse assistance to the Allies when they were engaged in battle.

General Graves's proclamation to the populace that he intended to guard and protect the railroads in his sectors for the use of all Russians, regardless of religious or political beliefs, was also read to mean that he was willing to extend a helping hand to the Bolsheviks. The upshot was that many attempts were made, by both Americans and Allies, to have Graves removed from command. It is remarkable that he could withstand such strong attacks. Finally he was openly called a Bolshevik. Stories were circulated about him and his men. In fact, Kolmikov, a prominent White Guard, considered it a point of honour if one of his cut-throats shot and killed some "Amerikanez" in the dark, and from behind good cover.

General Graves had two very able assistants, Colonel C. H. Morrow, in command of two battalions of infantry stationed in Transbaikalia; and Colonel Henry Styer, commanding the 27th and 31st regiments. His headquarters were in Khabarovsk. Both these districts were extremely dangerous, as Ataman Semenov was in charge of Transbaikalia and Ataman Kolmikov in possession of Khabarovsk. Both gentlemen were notorious "murderers, robbers and dissolute scoundrels," as Graves justly called them. It is impossible to tell which was the worse—they were equally obnoxious.

Being stationed at headquarters, I did not witness the major activities of these men at first hand. However, as chief translator, I had to look over, each day, a great number of reports of their atrocities, and I usually translated personally the appeals to Americans from victims of their "patriotism." All their crimes were committed in the name of high patriotic idealism and justified by the need of their army. Anyone in possession of either money or goods was immediately adjudged a Bolshevik, arrested, murdered and his property taken into the military fund. Any chance witness of such an execution was disposed of promptly also.

Even this could be understood if another element had not entered into the solving of their financial problems. This element was the inhuman cruelty, the devilish sadism that accompanied all their actions. I did not believe that such actions could win the population to our side.

The memory of those days is still fraught with horror, even after two decades have passed. Semenov used to boast that he could not sleep at night if he had not killed someone during the day. The robbery of passing trains, the mass execution of the passengers and the burning of whole villages were common occurrences. Even worse were the individual murders. These were committed with the cold, calculating joy of the sadist. Baron Ungern, the right-hand man of Semenov, maintained a pack of wolves to whom he fed his selected victims. Some were burned alive at the stake, and some torn in half by horses. Sipailov, commandant to Semenov, considered it a joke to end a party by strangling the nearest chambermaid, and used to boast to his friends that his great collection of watches and rings consisted of "orphans" whose owners he had murdered. Kolmikov and Semenov not only killed men and women but also murdered any child related to their victims. The cries of the

victims could not be heard, for they were dragged into the hills or the forests, loaded on top of each other in military vans. Many were mercifully suffocated before they reached the place of execution.

The officers of the American Expeditionary Force were the only members of the Allied forces in Siberia who branded the Russian would-be saviours as the killers they were. The rest of the Allies closed their eyes to acts of atrocity that must have made the devil shudder in hell.

The horror of the reign of the little black man, Kolmikov, is brought home by the fact that in the end his own people rebelled. Three hundred of them fled into the hills and another four hundred found refuge with Colonel Styer and his regiments. At one time a clash seemed inevitable between the Americans and Kolmikov, but the Japanese, for once, intelligently interfered. Their influence was paramount, for he was in every sense a puppet of the Japanese state. After this impasse, Kolmikov and Semenov made secret plans for a sudden attack which would wipe out all the Americans in Siberia. The plan became known to General Horvat, to Colonel Budenko, the fortress commander, and to Mr. Medviedev, the head of the local zemstvo. They promptly informed General Graves and a catastrophe was prevented.

Colonel Morrow had more than his share of trouble with Semenov, but he always got his way. The rank and file of the Americans were so angry that they took any opportunity to fight with Semenov's men. One day about forty doughboys attacked an armoured train in the open and simply kicked Semenov's men out of it, to the great joy of the local population. The laughter of the Russians was well hidden, but I am sure that nothing had brought such merriment to that little Russian village since the people began to rule.

Kolmikov and Semenov were the greatest annoyances but were by no means exceptions. General

Romanovsky, who handled the political functions of the Kolchak government, and General Ivanov-Rinov, another Kolchak man, offered to sell Graves their influence for \$20,000 per month. For this sum they would stop all propaganda against the Americans. But it was General Rosanov who later began openly calling the Americans Bolsheviks. His nature is best illustrated by one of his general orders which read in substance as follows :

If Red leaders are found in a village or revolt is offered in any way, shoot one out of every ten of the inhabitants. If any village meets you with armed force it must be burned to the ground and the entire male population executed by shooting. In such cases all property is to be confiscated for the use of the army. . . .

In the middle of 1919 General Graves went to Omsk, Kolchak's capital, and returned late in August. A rumour spread among the men at headquarters that he was disappointed in what he had found. He was supposed to have said that "the army of Kolchak is a myth and nothing can prevent the Bolsheviks from overrunning Siberia." The idea was so astonishing and unbelievable that for the first time I began to doubt General Graves. I became ashamed of the inability of the White forces to remove the yoke of Bolshevism from Russia. I refused to believe that the fight was a myth. Bolshevism and Russia, it seemed to me, were incompatible. I felt in duty bound to join the army of my own people and fight the Reds.

2

Once again I was en route across Siberia—this time to join the forces of Kolchak.

Immense Siberia ! Here were five million square miles, compared with only three and three-quarter

millions in all Europe with its numerous states. Here were natural resources, great and diversified, and food-stuffs of such abundance as to free the comparatively small population of twenty-five millions from the necessity of exercising any industry whatever. Siberia was rich, both in resources and in the potential industry of a free and daring people. The imperial government had granted to each male member of a family 125 acres of free homestead, and large farms were spread throughout the land. Grain, justly considered the best in the world, grew in the fertile soil. Cattle, famous for their rich milk products, were everywhere. There was plenty of everything but peace.

Who were these people who inhabited this paradise? Many of them came of the ancient stock of Cossacks who conquered the land at the end of the sixteenth century. And thither, also, had been sent political exiles, daring men, by the tens of thousands, and still later a young stock of Russian pioneers had invaded the country. Because of geographical isolation and lack of communication with mother Russia, the Siberians had been forced into self-sufficiency and independence.

As we entered Transbaikalia, which was under Semenov's governorship, I was prepared for any surprise, as the whole country along the railroad was dotted with his famous "killing stations." These were ostensibly for the extermination of Bolsheviks, but the term was applied at Semenov's discretion to all travellers through the land. He had delegated his authority to a number of his unscrupulous adherents and their judgment was quick and final, without explanation and without the possibility of appeal.

I had a wealthy Jewish friend in Harbin who had joined me on this journey, to rescue his relatives from Tomsk. Officially he travelled as my chauffeur, and he was happy to enter Siberia in this disguise. He

was immediately arrested when we reached Dauria—Semenov's agents had learned his plan and had sent a telegram from China. My protests had no effect and I had no alternative but to leave the train with him. It was good fortune for both of us that the officer who executed the arrest graduated from the same high school in Harbin as myself. According to tradition, men from the same school were bound to assist one another whenever possible. My new friend cautiously passed me a slip of paper which contained his address in the town. He whispered that he would return there for lunch and would I go at that time. It would thus appear that I was merely a friend paying a social visit.

At noon my friend informed me that the situation was not promising. My "chauffeur" was to be detained indefinitely in the military prison, pending "financial adjustments," if any; if such adjustments were not forthcoming, then unfortunately my friend would have to be "charged off." This was a frank statement and I was grateful for it. We consulted as to ways and means. Open bribery of the man in charge of the prison seemed out of the question. My chauffeur was indicted as a Bolshevik and, unless his relatives came forward speedily with the necessary ransom, he was to be executed. It was useless to think of employing an attorney to prove him innocent, for Semenov's men constituted both judicial and executive powers.

We finally evolved a scheme. I would offer to post a cash bond of about ten thousand roubles, obtain the custody of the prisoner and take him to Chita, capital of the district. Here I had some influential friends who could be of greater assistance to me. I was willing to increase the amount of "bail," but it was better to start with a lower figure in order to leave a bargaining margin. My classmate left to see the warden. He returned in a couple of hours with a

broad smile on his face and handed me a passport bearing the name of one Mr. Coopin, which he informed me was to be the name of my chauffeur from that time on, inasmuch as the gentleman who happened to bear my companion's real name would be executed during the night. Late that night the new Mr. Coopin and I left Dauria. A bottle of peroxide had transformed this very dark Mr. Coopin into a half-red creature. We were provided with two saddle horses, rode about ten miles and then boarded the train. In the morning we should be in Chita with no intention of reporting to anyone. Coopin would proceed alone and I would remain behind to block the way if necessary.

We had a restful night, if a night in a baggage car can be so described, and reached our destination in the morning. I remained with Coopin until the train left for the west, then hired a cab and went to see my friend Chernov, who lived on the Atamanskaya.

He greeted me with great delight and immediately arranged for a hot bath and a healthy lunch. He looked over my equipment and scolded me roundly. My weapons were inadequate; the sabre was acceptable, it was made of good Zolinger steel, but the revolver was trash . . . a Belgian Browning.

"I must get you something else, something adequate, something more than a toy," he added emphatically. "How about an American forty-five? Oh, I admit they are bulky and entirely too heavy, but they are better than that Belgian pop-gun."

"That will be fine," I answered. I realized that if there was to be any fighting—and I knew there would be plenty as soon as I had joined Kolchak's forces—I should need the best fighting tools I could get. I had found it impossible to buy a good gun in Vladivostok and welcomed the opportunity that now came my way. However, I was surprised to find that Chernov did not have the Colt he had offered me.

"That does not matter," he assured me. "We will

get it quite easily." He called to his orderly through the kitchen door. "Ivan, come here."

A heavy man with magnificent shoulders and a thin, womanish waist came into the room. He wore the uniform of the Transbaikalian Cossacks.

"Go and get an American Colt for his Excellency," he ordered sharply.

"Yes, sir," the man answered and strode out of the room.

"What is this?" I asked my friend in astonishment. "How can he get me a gun? You didn't give him any instructions, nor any money."

"Oh, holy innocence!" Chernov exclaimed. "Come to the window and I will show you a sample of Siberian shopping."

The Atamanskaya was crowded with the noonday throng of military men. All nationalities were mixed together, the Cossack predominating. Among the foreigners there were more American soldiers than any other, as this was their district. They were dressed in heavy winter uniforms with huge fur gloves extending almost to their elbows. Each one carried a Colt strapped loosely in a holster at his side.

Soon we discovered Ivan approaching the Atamanskaya from a side street. He held his dancing horse with a strong hand, then suddenly let it loose and galloped at full speed, bent low at the side of an American, grabbed the Colt from its holster, made a sharp turn into another side street and disappeared with the ease of a ghost.

I was still dumbfounded when he entered the back door in ten minutes and handed me the Colt.

I could only utter, "Well, I'll be damned." But I attached the gun to my belt.

To finish the incident, I might mention that that weapon later became the proud possession of a Mongolian chieftain to whom I gave it as a bribe. But of that more later.

Nikolay Chernov wanted me to cast in my lot with Semenov and stay in Chita. However, the excuse that I was an artilleryman and that they had no artillery to speak of presented itself and I was able to leave gracefully to join Kolchak.

Once again I boarded the train with the feeling of escape, so detestable had been the atmosphere of Chita. Soon we approached the outskirts of Verkhneudinsk, the city where the American headquarters in Transbaikalia were located, and we passed an American armoured train. It was crudely patched together out of open freight cars, with sacks of sand substituted for armour. I could not help but think of the treacherous dangers that those doughboys were subjected to in my land. They seemed so entirely out of place in the wilderness of Siberia.

The train reached the shores of Lake Baikal and plunged into the miles of tunnels. Soon we reached Irkutsk, the administrative and cultural capital of Eastern Siberia. Kolchak's headquarters were still four thousand miles away in the city of Omsk. I never dreamed that the time would come, on Kolchak's defeat, when I would cover this distance on horseback.

I found another friend at the station in Irkutsk. He was the administrative officer representing the military in the direction of railroad traffic. He suggested that I should stay in Irkutsk, describing enthusiastically the gay and easy night life of the city.

"We make a lot of money here, Dmitri," he said in an undertone as a final and clinching argument. Then he explained that it was customary to charge, or rather to sell, a freight car to a merchant-speculator for \$40,000 in addition to the regular freight charges which went to the railroad . . . "sometimes."

I can't remember what puzzled me most at the time, the figure of \$40,000 or the open cynicism with which the whole thing was stated.

I felt that something was wrong with Irkutsk. The

population was wholly lacking in loyalty or any expression of enthusiasm for the White regime. The civilians seemed to do their best to stay away from the military and, although they showed no open antagonism, their whole attitude was one of distrust.

After a few hours' stay I continued westward. The military atmosphere became more and more pronounced. All bridges were strongly fortified, barbed wire surrounded each approach with its prickly maze, and all trees and undergrowth had been cleaned out for some distance around. Even the smallest stations resembled fortresses. There were soldiers everywhere, their officers dressed in neat uniforms of foreign cut. The men carried Japanese rifles, for the most part, and wore cheap Japanese coats and trousers with Russian imperial trimming to indicate the branch of service.

We passed many trains loaded to capacity with anxious-faced people. I soon learned that no one believed in Kolchak and that everyone looked for refuge in the East. This information was given me by an elderly man who took an interest in my affairs. He also told me that the trains were infested with Bolshevik spies who gathered complete information about the movements and concentration of White troops and who were carrying on a successful campaign against the present-day rulers in foreign uniforms. Finally he suggested in a guarded tone that I should return immediately to my home. He looked anxiously at my face with concern in his kind, bushy eyes and said in an undertone :

"Young man, your sacrifice is untimely and unnecessary. The motherland is swept by the fires of the inferno and nothing can stop the coming events. The resurrection is far in the future. Go away now as quickly as you can. Your country will need you later, to be sure, so don't commit useless suicide."

By the time we reached Kansk the situation looked so hopeless that I became nervous and thought of

returning to China ; but after further thought, I dismissed my hesitation as a sign of weakness and resolved to continue, come what might. Kansk was of considerable historical interest. When Nicholas II commenced the great Siberian railroad in 1891 it was decided that Kansk should be the terminus of the Alaska-Siberia branch line. The road was to leave Kansk, go to Kamchatka, then through a tunnel under Bering Strait to Alaska, where it would be linked to the Canadian transcontinental system.

When I arrived there I found the region in pathetic ruins as a consequence of the desperate battles with the Reds. The Whites, who were victorious because of the aid of the Allies, had burned the country and killed much of the population. Many of the villages were ploughed up, leaving nothing to indicate that there had once been a prosperous settlement on the spot. I could understand the rage of the former ruling class, but I could not understand the efficacy of such a method of reconstructing Russia after the downfall of the monarchy. I felt that the Whites were betraying Russia for the benefit of their selfish class interests.

At Tyumen I sought out another old classmate. He was not to be found, but I heard the story of his tragic end. He had gone to Omsk and, though only twenty, had edited a Red newspaper in the heart of Kolchak's capital. He was very successful, not only as an editor, but in escaping arrest—until one day he was caught and hanged. Poor fellow. He had been considered quite an authority on the Chinese language at the consular school in Vladivostok. I remembered him for his many clever, detailed arguments with our professor, himself an authority in the field.

Finally I reached Omsk. It was so filled with strangers that I had difficulty in finding someone to direct me to the commandant's office. No one seemed to know anything about the town. The hotels were

crowded and I spent the first night sitting in the restaurant of the railroad station. The next day I failed to get posted to an artillery regiment and, with the fear of another night of sitting on a counter stool, I moved into a dark corner under the stairway leading to the restaurant. This arrangement was effected by paying the proprietor about four times as much as the best hotel room would normally have cost. My bed consisted of several empty boxes over which I spread my military coat. For a pillow I had my saddlebags. For a week I lived in this luxury and then in desperation I reported to headquarters that I would depart for the east as a deserter unless I was taken care of immediately. That afternoon I was posted to the Egersky Exemplary Brigade as a member of the 2nd Artillery Regiment.

I left headquarters in high spirits and encountered General Knox, an English officer acting as Kolchak's right-hand man. He seemed to feel that he was not merely one of the army here but rather the leading figure of the whole White movement.

I went to report to my regiment, which was located in the village of Alexandrovka about ten miles from Omsk. I enjoyed the trip. We left by a long caravan of sledges. The morning was bright and I felt communicative. However, the peasants who accompanied the sledges were in a grim mood. They barely answered my remarks, but as soon as they found that I lacked enthusiasm about Omsk myself, they opened their hearts and started complaining. The military men requisitioned their wheat, oats, barley and horses, giving worthless roubles in exchange or, as was generally the case, leaving behind a scribbled IOU. Their sons were mobilized and thrown into battles, and the whole outcome seemed dubious.

"The generals want their estates back," they muttered. "There will be no Constitutional Assembly. Kolchak is no better than the Reds." And then again,

shaking their heads: "The generals want to rule us as before."

I found myself unable to reply to their just remarks and soon became myself as glum a creature as my drivers. A doubt crept into my heart; my faith in the White leadership was beginning to wane.

At Alexandrovka I learned that the capital of the Whites was in danger. But there was a more immediate matter to occupy my attention: my initiation into my new regiment. The military tradition demanded that each new-comer be given as rough treatment as could be devised. However, as life had of itself become rough, my partners in the regiment could invent nothing but to give me a young and very nasty bronco, notorious for kicking and throwing his unwelcome riders. I had a lot of sport trying to break him, and I think I should eventually have succeeded had he not broken his leg performing one of his many tricks. I had to shoot him.

I paid little attention to the regiment, so great was my uncertainty of mind and my despair at the time. Our colonel, whose German name I now forget, had been a fierce warrior. He had no mercy and always accomplished the worst when it came to the enemy. He boasted of his Kansk expedition and regretted that the opportunity to repeat so glorious a chapter had not presented itself. He had a peculiar drinking bowl made of smooth ivory and trimmed with rich silver. One of my fellow officers told me its history.

"Once we encountered strong resistance at the large village of Dubrava. We fought the Reds for three days and nights without rest. At last the enemy exhausted their ammunition and surrendered. We killed every Red, forcing them to dig their graves before the execution. The peasants, who buried the corpses, were shot too. The leader was beheaded and the elder of the village was compelled to carry the

bloody head into his house, put it in a large pot, light the fire and boil it. He lost his mind and was shot. His assistant was assigned to the job but proved to be no stronger mentally and had to be rescued by a bullet. Man after man was assigned to the task, and finally the head was boiled and cleaned, and the top made into this bowl."

I heard other stories during that awful week at Alexandrovka. And then the elaborate structure that the Allies had built round the Russian generals collapsed and all ran for their lives.

3

It was morning and the snow was falling. The endless dance of the delicate white crystals hid the distance with an exquisite veil. The forests, charmed, stood in complete stillness and the village drowsed in peaceful sleepiness.

Inside our hut it was warm and comfortable. Suddenly the trumpeter was heard blowing the call to arms. In a moment the batteries opened fire. The Bolsheviks were crossing the frozen Irtysh River. We grabbed our coats and ran outside. Before us we saw a long black line of the enemy entering the open space of the river. In some places the ice had broken, hurling the men into the bitter waters. The current laughed at their struggles and swept them under the ice. In those places where the shells exploded, pieces of flesh were tossed high into the air and dropped back upon those still making desperate efforts to gain the shore. Under our unexpected artillery fire the enemy soon lost his go and hastily retreated into the forest.

Meanwhile our transport was prepared for a long caravan and began its retreat, for we had word that this was the beginning of the Reds' major drive which had long been expected. Our right flank was torn

and we were ordered to load the guns on sledges and leave the village.

Slowly, with great caution, we left our positions. I was last with my machine-gun division. The snow was still falling and soon the village disappeared from sight. But we were not alone in the beautiful valley. The enemy was close at hand. They might be anywhere, hidden by the impossible snow. It fell with nerve-sapping monotony, and soon I began to hate it. "When will it stop dancing!" my mind kept repeating over and over again.

The enemy pressed us hard. I began to lose my men, who pleaded to be shot rather than left to a horrible death at the hands of the revengeful Reds. We swung behind Omsk, losing the line of communication with our high command as the snowstorm gathered intensity. Soon it became a blizzard and I gathered my men in close formation. The wounded men handicapped us, but we succeeded in reaching the caravan of our retreating regiment. We felt sure that the enemy would not advance in the face of the storm, but we continued our march. For the first time in my life I realized that pure-white snow can be the cruellest of all nature's gifts. It was blinding us with a devilish persistence, driving its cold, fluffy substance into the openings of our clothes and stabbing icy needles to our very bones. It covered the road, so essential for the transport of our heavy guns, and threw men, guns and horses into an insane jumble that was uncontrollable.

Until evening we crawled slowly, fighting for each painful step, then suddenly found ourselves in a tiny darkened village. To us it meant rest. As soon as we opened the first door the illusion was gone. The village was occupied by Reds. A battle began in the huts, then spread to the streets. We fought like ape men in this tiny place, too tired to retreat, bitter at the thought of going anywhere in that storm. But

we had an overwhelming superiority in numbers, and soon all the Reds were dead. We threw the corpses out of the huts and settled like a horde of locusts over the small village. The peaceful inhabitants, mortally scared, scurried around trying to please a tired army. Soon a fat supper appeared and we consumed it with a furious intensity. Fully dressed and with our weapons grasped tightly in our arms, we fell into a half sleep, half stupor.

The morning brought an unreal stillness, the stillness so characteristic of undeveloped virgin countries. The fresh, deep snow covered everything. In the distance, a birch grove stood with its pure-white stems supporting a canopy of downy white cotton.

Our first problem was to get our guns in battle position, and then to contact the army commander in Omsk. The Reds, in surrounding Kolchak's capital, had torn the front in such a way as to isolate our regiment from the rest of our forces. Our scouts brought back word that we were in a good position to harass the enemy from the rear, and we immediately made the necessary preparations. We again loaded our guns on sledges and, guided by a few peasants, moved in the direction of Omsk. After we had gone about five miles, our advance guard warned us of danger. The regiment immediately spread itself in battle formation and waited breathlessly for the word of command. With guns ready to fire, we received orders—to retreat. The Reds had taken Omsk the night before, capturing a hundred and ten pieces of artillery, ten generals and about forty-five thousand men. The disillusioned army had given itself up and surrendered almost without resistance. Kolchak had escaped under the protection of the Poles.

Our advance was futile. Headquarters were destroyed and the miserable remainder of a once-powerful unit had become individuals, fighting desperate single-handed battles for their very lives.

So we, too, turned our backs and ran toward the east. Fortunately for us the Reds were busy celebrating their victory in Omsk and we were given a breathing space. We decided to retreat as far as we could, re-contact the rest of the dispersed White units, reconstruct the front, and then start a fresh assault upon the enemy.

How mistaken we were! Our leaders, native and foreign, fought fiercely for priority in the matter of transportation. The English general received a telegram from the Bolsheviks thanking King George for the hundreds of thousands of "swell uniforms" left in the warehouses of Omsk. The Polish troops, being mortally afraid of the Reds, soon requested Kolchak to leave.

The Czechoslovaks carried many military trophies, in the way of Russian girls and Russian furniture picked up at random, so they were in a hurry to reach China. Capture, however, became almost a certainty when they reached Irkutsk. A hurried conference with the Bolsheviks' agents pointed the way out. They would be allowed to go through on one condition—that they should deliver Kolchak to the Reds. After consulting with the French General Janin, the Czechs delivered Kolchak to the Communists.

A firing squad was formed and a large hole cut in the ice on the river. Kolchak was taken to the hole and placed in front of it. He demanded the right, as the senior officer present, to command the squad, and the favour was granted. He called the men before him to attention and gave the customary orders in a calm, but tired voice.

"Ready. . . . Aim. . . . FIRE!"

His body fell through the hole in the ice and the current of the swift Angara carried him toward the Arctic. When word of his death was brought us, I recalled how he looked when I saw him last. Tired and disappointed, pale and thin from overwork and

sleepless nights, and preoccupied with his agonizing thoughts, he seemed already beyond this world. He must have found death a welcome rest.

For us who remained and were fleeing for our lives, every day brought new fights, new dangers. We met Red scouting parties and the irregular guerrillas of the partisans, who had vowed to destroy us to the last soldier. And we, not to be outdone, left no living prisoners behind us. There were only two alternatives in those days, kill or be killed, and we fought like furies from hell, preferring in the end to blow out our own brains rather than accept the horrible end that would follow capture.

Many times we passed the ghostly figures of dozens of White prisoners hanging from the trees that lined the roadsides. They were grisly warnings as they hung there, their feet eaten away by hungry wolves. Each night we fought our way into a village and slept fully dressed, our tired hands clutching loaded weapons. One night all the officers of our second battery were slashed to pieces by butcher knives in the hands of a small detachment of raiders. A few days later we caught a Bolshevik commissar, a former army officer. We tied him to a pole and marched a detachment past him. Each man struck him as hard as he could in the face. He died in fifteen minutes. The next commissar we caught was beaten to death with a nagaika, a strong army whip which tears the flesh from the bones.

One lucky day we encountered a famous Red leader. She was a peasant girl named Dunya. When we captured her she laughed in our faces. We dragged her to the communal grave where many of her partisans were lying dead. When she saw the ugly sight she became hysterical and jumped into the opening. We covered her with earth while she was still living. One execution I shall never forget. The victim was an old man, a member of the so-called "Silver Battalion,"

which got its name by virtue of the fact that all its members had hair and whiskers whitened by old age.

He stood squarely in front of the firing squad, looking at us with kind, aged eyes. Just before the order to fire was given, he smiled and spoke to us.

"I am old and it is time for me to die. I am happy to die now, for it is glorious to die for what is right. Shoot me, you children, and regret always that you were born too late."

Once, during a march, our third battery began to stampede, and we succeeded in bringing the horses under control only after a hard fight. The reason for their fright was evident. The battery had run into a huge heap of frozen corpses. Here were old and young in handcuffs, shackled like convicts. They had been slashed with sabres and pierced with bayonets. The story the mound told was simple. After the evacuation of Omsk, all the prisoners had been taken along with the retreating troops. But the soldiers tired of caring for prisoners, of feeding and sheltering them, so they simply exterminated them.

Another time I saw, on the horizon, a strange line of trains several miles long. They were unnaturally still and only a few dark figures moved about them. A few of us rode over to investigate. The front locomotives had exhausted their fuel and water and the line had been blocked. Others had come up and used up their fuel trying to move the great mass, and in the end all had become frozen to the tracks. Later, I learned that forty-five thousand men, women and children froze to death in those awful trains.

Another incident I remember vividly was the case of a fragile woman and a delicate girl who pulled with all their might at a small sledge upon which there reposed a healthy-looking man. I was about to strike him with my whip when the young woman pleaded with me to do him no harm. He was her husband and

his legs were frozen. They were trying to get him to some habitable place in this terrible land of desolation.

So we pushed on for several weeks until at last we broke through the encircling grasp of death. We slowed our progress then, resting every two or three days. We worked our way toward the east, hoping to find that the Whites meanwhile had reorganized somewhere. But the miracle did not happen. The generals left us to our fate, and the Allies rallied around Semenov, forgetting that but a few weeks earlier they had reviled him as a robber and a murderer.

One day we paused to inspect our regiment. We found that our losses, of both men and horses, had been terrific. Some fifty miles to the north was situated the city of Tomsk. It was still in the possession of the Whites and under the command of a general whose name I had mercifully forgotten. He was one of the famous leaders who ran so fast that you could never find him in an hour of need. It was decided that we should replenish our supply of men and horses at Tomsk, and I, as regimental adjutant, was given a troop of fifty men, one officer, and about two hundred thousand roubles and sent on the assignment. I was told that the general would assist me in my duty and advance me the rest of the necessary money. I left that morning, and never saw my regiment again.

The fifty men given me comprised the commandant's platoon of our regiment, whose duty it was to perform all executions. The officer in charge was known for his cruelty, which bordered upon sadism. He was supposed to teach the meaning of discipline to the new recruits. When we stopped at the first village for lunch he decided to give one of the young soldiers a sample of his wares. To his astonishment, I interfered and the young soldier was left alone. I did not know it then, but that little incident saved our lives, for the platoon became friendly to me and did not betray its officers in a later critical moment.

Towards the evening of the second day we reached the village of Krasnovka, about four miles from Tomsk. I decided to make my headquarters there and visit Tomsk in the morning. I noticed that the atmosphere in the village was unusual. The peasants seemed to be not only fearless but mean and insolent. They served my tea in a crude, dirty container while their fine silver was displayed openly upon the shelves. In ordinary times, they would not have dared commit such an insult. It was nearly nightfall and I decided to remain until morning. I warned my platoon to keep close guard during the night over the ammunition and horses.

Soon after supper had been served, the elder of the village came to the hut and reported to me in a hesitant undertone. His face was serious. He was a thin, wizened little runt, and very respectful.

"Something is wrong in the city, your Excellency. The soldiers abandoned it two days ago and the civilians have formed a militia and are taking charge of affairs. I humbly advise you to proceed to the east right away."

I didn't believe the old man. Taking two of my men, I left immediately for Tomsk. The city was in complete darkness and looked deserted. Soon, however, I noticed small groups of three or four men in civilian clothes, well armed, skulking in the shadows of the buildings. We turned and rode away, soon reaching Krasnovka village again. Everything was in readiness and we immediately left the village, moving toward Tomsk. We had to cross through the city to reach the main road, as it was impossible to encircle it in the deep snow.

We entered a forest of green pine trees. The beautiful night seemed to be full of bright, glittering stars. The snow hissed and crunched under the rhythmical jamming of our horses' feet. No one spoke; each man was alone with his deep thoughts. We left the quiet

sanctuary of the forest and began the descent into a long valley. Suddenly two men in an elaborate city sledge dashed from the little grove below. Their lean Siberian trotter was remarkably fast. In another moment they had disappeared into the night. Our shots sounded foolish, as if we had tried to stop the passing of some ghost.

A youth in a student uniform blocked our way as we reached the outskirts of the city. He represented the outpost of the city's vigilantes. There was a short conversation, a refusal to let us enter, a thrust of the arm, the gleam of a dagger blade, and we were free to pass. We knew only too well that we could not use our rifles, for the sound of shots would arouse the enemy. Soon we came upon a group of militiamen and attacked them with sabres. The affair was over so quickly that they had not an opportunity to fire a single shot. We were on our feet now, with horses in reserve. We slunk along the streets, seeking dark lanes and side alleys. We reached the opposite edge of the town after a couple of hours. Suddenly a loud voice halted us and informed us that we were well covered with machine guns, and that they would immediately open fire if we moved. A man came forward and, looking us over from a respectful distance, spoke :

"You are directed to report to the commandant."

As soon as I heard the word "commandant," I knew that the force opposing us was White, for the Reds used the term "commissar." We were glad to join our people at last and surrendered gladly. Our guide took us to a building bearing the imposing title "Palace of Science," where the office of the commandant was located.

The great building was well lighted inside. A crowd of military men filled it to capacity. Everywhere soldiers in White uniforms scurried about. When we

reached the second floor we realized our mistake. Machine guns guarded the entrance and Red soldiers were behind them. We had fallen into a trap.

We were immediately surrounded and our weapons taken from us. The Red leader stepped up and demanded to know which of us were officers. I felt as though I were tumbling into a bottomless pit. A chill ran down my spine and in my mouth was the acrid taste of fear. I gripped the nearest soldier by the arm. It proved to be the man I had saved from punishment. He looked me in the face for a moment, turned pale and spoke to the Communist :

"We haven't any officers with us. They all ran away in the darkness and left us to ourselves." The rest of my men joined in a loud clamour berating the "officers" who had been so cowardly as to desert them. The ruse worked as I had disposed of all insignia before entering the city so that we all looked alike.

The city had several cadet schools and the cadets were still fighting the Reds. In a little while we heard the shouting of the attacking Whites. The Reds opened fire from behind the protecting walls of the building. The attack, however, appeared successful, and our guards began to tear off their Red insignia in order to pretend that they had been prisoners along with us.

As soon as we observed this favourable development we exchanged meaning glances, and in a moment my men were smashing the heads of the enemy with all sorts of improvised weapons. I fought my way to the machine gun and opened fire into the middle of the Reds. They ran, and we smashed the windows and jumped outside. The soft, deep snow saved our legs. We ran about the streets trying to make contact with the attacking Whites, but they had been defeated and had retreated in an unknown direction.

I found about thirty-five of my men, the remnant

of my platoon. We had lost all our horses and had salvaged barely enough weapons to defend ourselves. The problem was acute. We had, first of all, to hide, and we tore down the door of a small church and entered the warm building. We sat on the floor and I called upon the men to speak. Everyone expressed a desire to follow my orders as before. No one knew the city, so I ordered the men to get as much sleep as they could. When morning came, we would decide upon our next move.

The morning brought little relief. The city was in the hands of the Bolsheviks and no one was allowed to enter or leave without an official permit. We could not slip away in the night, for we had so small a supply of ammunition that such a plan would spell suicide. But we did have money and soon purchases of food were arranged, and we exchanged our uniforms for shabby civilian clothes. I bought some sledges and a few broken-down cab horses. The men were ordered to scout around and pick up the members of the regiment who might still be in the city. They were to pretend that they were peasants whose carriages had been requisitioned and who were now trying to return to their homes. I, too, became a cab driver and each night I returned to the church to see how many of my men had been able to get away. I intended to be the last to leave.

One day while I was waiting for passengers, a militiaman called my attention to the fact that I would have to get a new licence—"a Red licence," he emphatically added. So I went to the police station. They examined me carefully and were about to give me a permit to operate when one of the Reds requested me to show him my hands.

"Oh, no," he said significantly. "This man, comrades, never has been and never will be a cab driver. Look at his hands—they are clean, and I see no callouses. Who the hell are you, anyway?"

I told them that I was a medical student trying to make my living in this new fashion.

"If you are a doctor, then go to the hospital. They are short of men over there after all these fights."

So they gave me a Red orderly, who delivered me to a central city hospital.

As a normally intelligent person, I knew, of course, something about medicine, about castor oil, iodine, carbolic acid, and some other things they use in hospitals. Besides, in the army we had all been taught the elements of first aid. So I was not entirely at a loss when the Reds invited me for a questioning.

A terrific epidemic of typhoid raged all over Siberia during those eventful years. The Communists organized numerous small groups of first-aid men. They sent them even to the remotest places to perform a thorough disinfection. Men who knew something about sanitation and were without fear of contagion themselves were lacking.

I figured that the sooner I left the high officials of the hospital the less chance the Communists would have of discovering my identity. I declared that I was familiar with disinfection. Naturally, they gladly accepted my services and immediately put me in charge of a new group of "medical assistants."

We had a huge German fumigator which kills germs in clothing by generating formalin vapours. This apparatus occupied one of our sledges. Another sledge was filled to capacity with a supply of carbolic acid, sulphur, acetic acid, a lot of glue and paper, and our working clothes, including gas masks. Two more of our sledges carried the personnel—myself and three Red soldiers. Our food supplies were so meagre, however, that I decided to purchase some groceries before leaving town. I stopped a cab, asking to be dropped at a certain market.

"And how are you going to pay me?" asked the driver sarcastically.

"With money, of course," I answered, getting into the vehicle.

"Hey, you! Not so fast. Haven't you read the papers to-day? Money is annulled. Now there are no more men with lots of money who can live without working. Now, get out of my cab unless you will pay me with something I can use." The cab driver waved his hand and slowly drove down the street.

My fellow-workers were in low spirits too. They were about to desert me under various pretences, and only my persistent promises to get food somehow kept them from clearing out. As a last argument, I began cheerfully to eat my black bread. They joined me doubtfully, but as "appetite comes with a meal," we ended with a hearty lunch, after devouring almost a half-week's supplies.

"Now to work," I said. We harnessed the horses, loaded our sledges, and drove out of town with a "Red permit" and under Red protection. I was delighted to go into the country and visit all those small settlements because it was my first opportunity to see Siberia and study its inhabitants. My vision was blocked, however, in the beginning, as in Soviet Russia the mind of everybody then was preoccupied by thoughts of food, to the exclusion of everything else. In this regard, the policy of the Communists of keeping the population on a semi-starvation basis has always been a great success; not only was resistance broken, but something very tangible was provided for everyday thinking and talking.

We soon reached a village where a soviet had already been established. I presented my credentials and asked a commissar to accompany me to the first hut and explain to the peasants the nature of disinfection. He did so, and I acquired unlimited authority to go about my business throughout the settlement. While the commissar was with me I used azotic acid, which does

not smell. When the commissar left I went to the next hut, a good-looking one. Here we opened a five-gallon container of carbolic acid, and immediately a hideous smell filled the house.

Our sprays soon made a mess of walls and ceiling, and we left the poor inhabitants bewildered by what had happened to them and their once comfortable place. Obviously, we soon acquired a reputation. It was the very thing I was after: sufficient notoriety.

When we entered the second hut in the row, the owner asked us humbly if we could apply that other, unsmelling device.

"Well, yes," I answered significantly, "but it is very costly and we just can't afford to do it. You know we are allowed to use the azotic acid only when there is a sick person in the house. So far as I can see, that is not the case with you."

"Maybe our respectable comrade would consider . . . eh, why . . . we certainly will be glad to do some favour for you if that other stuff—what do you call it? A dozen eggs, for example, or some butter. Please, comrade."

"Oh, well, a dozen eggs will do."

By the end of that historic day we had enough good, fresh food to last at least a week. The spirits of our small company rose proportionately. My men enthusiastically expressed the idea that I was the smartest of all the smart chiefs that were ever born into this world.

Thus, when we needed a fresh supply of oats and hay, or bread, meat and butter, the problem was simply solved. We disinfected, for example, some peasant's clothing in our huge German machine with the atrocious stench of formalin to be sure that nobody would wear it for a month. In an emergency, we would even burn half the clothing, or again we could use the sulphur candles. For this last device, we requested the commissar to assign us some bath-house.

We were men of authority and could apply our medicine in many useful ways, and we soon terrorized the population for hundreds of miles. No doubt ours was a pretty crude cynicism, but then it was one way to escape starvation. Moreover, the peasants had an overabundance of food supplies since they refused to deliver it to cities and towns to be sold in exchange for the worthless Soviet money.

How successful we were in killing typhoid in our territory, I do not know, but in a month we had used up all our supplies. So we returned to the Fifth Red Brigade for new supplies, and there we were thanked for our devotion and hard work "in the cause of suffering humanity."

All winter we travelled, visiting the remote places. We called on famous penitentiaries where convicts were sent for life sentences at hard labour. The majority of them had been liberated by the Bolsheviks and only the most desperate criminals remained behind the walls. Those liberated proved themselves of a good pioneering stock. They erected comfortable dwellings, gained independence and comparative prosperity. We found also that the disinfection was now welcome in a great majority of villages, as people saw that the epidemic was quickly subdued in places visited by the medical first-aid groups. They also became appreciative of the risks we encountered, and therefore gladly supplied us with food and lodgings of their own accord. They spoke of Bolshevism with satisfaction, as compared with the White Terror of a few months ago.

Now there was a small Chinese settlement with a Chinese doctor in the vicinity of the Fifth Brigade. Men who could translate Chinese into Russian were asked to report to headquarters immediately. I thought there might be a chance to go to China with some high Red officials, so I decided to respond.

It was Easter Day and the peasants celebrated it with all their former festivity, notwithstanding a Bolshevik decree containing the significant phrase: "Religion is simply an opiate for the common people and a dirty device of the wealthy to keep the people's passions subdued." We were staying at a large village, Ostrovka, picked by us for this occasion. The beautiful Angara River divided us from another settlement where the staff of the brigade was stationed, and there I reported the next day.

At a large table sat the comrade commander, a commissar and many other high Red authorities, among whom I noticed a chief surgeon. I was directed to a seat at the end of the table. The Chinese were brought into the room. All were badly scared, especially the doctor, who had been accused of practising medicine without a licence. They were childishly happy, however, when they heard me addressing them in their native language. The doctor had to pass a strict cross-examination. After his pharmacy was inspected—and confiscated by the greedy chief surgeon—the Chinese were sent to a local prison, where they were questioned for two days. On the third day they humbly mentioned to me that the Reds had forgotten to feed them all this time. My eloquent appeal to humanity and justice for these unfortunate victims of "damned capitalism" resulted finally in the liberation of all the Chinese.

"Tell them to go back to their farming," I was commanded. "Every week they must report to their local commissar. Those who fail to do so will be sent back to prison."

Nobody invited me to go to China after the trial and, disappointed, I returned to my carbolic acid. My men were waiting impatiently and urged me to go on another of our expeditions before I should be called again to a fruitless trial. Easter was over and we had to return to our ordinary military rations, so an

expedition was deemed necessary. We all agreed that the regulation rations were the most detestable thing in the world.

As we drank our last cups of tea before starting on the trip, a coptinarmus, or supply man, brought us a large envelope, telling us that he would return with our medical supplies soon. When he departed we opened the envelope and found inside a large red star with black trimming and three small squares of red. Immediately we pasted the star on our disinfecting machine and tossed for the red squares. As one man was left without a red decoration, we cut a small piece from the star. Presently the coptinarmus arrived again. He looked at the red star and then at us in disgust and anger. Spitting on the floor, he let out a stream of profanity. Finally, I gathered that all the red matter had been intended for me. It was the insignia of a major, to which rank I had apparently been promoted overnight.

"Well, how could we know?" I replied innocently. "Besides, what do I care about this 'major' business? We have plenty of troubles already with our carbolic acid."

Without so much as a reply, the coptinarmus threw me a new uniform and, on leaving, he stopped in the doorway:

"Report to-morrow to headquarters if you don't want to be court-martialled and shot."

That was that. We hotly argued my appointment and my men decided that I had better report. We procured the remains of our supply of bad vodka, got drunk and soon fell asleep sitting around the table. The next morning my gay fellow-workers left the brigade under the leadership of my assistant, and I remained at Ostrovka as a Red army major.

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I had been appointed assistant to the chief of the Reconnaissance Department. My immediate duty was to write surveys on certain topics in regard to the Orient in general and China in particular. As no reference books could be obtained in the circumstances, I had to write everything from memory. Fortunately, I still remembered courses of Oriental geography, history and political economy given at Vladivostok University, which I attended before the war. In addition to that, the fact that I had lived and travelled in the Orient almost all my life helped me to get away with everything I said or wrote.

I found the Red headquarters quiet and orderly, and also clean. The majority of the "People's Commanders" were former Imperial officers and they exercised a strong influence over all affairs of the brigade. The so-called "Red" officers, promoted from the ranks, were decidedly in the background, and ordinarily the Bolsheviks did not pay much attention to their hot arguments and boastful suggestions. A political commissar with his own council, or soviet, composed of soldiers, truck and cab drivers, and some janitors from the hospital, was in charge of the "revolutionary consciousness" of the brigade. He had power over the life and death of everyone, and I found that this power was the reason why the Imperial officers were so quiet and reserved.

Before any of them could be appointed to any responsible duty, a thorough investigation of personal records was made and newspaper publication circulated, in order that anybody who might have an objection might file it with the commissar. Very often personal grievances against their former officers were settled by common soldiers through the medium of this publication. Simple gossip, however absurd, was never

checked or verified, and an officer might be suddenly arrested and without any explanation sent to prison.

To my surprise, I found it easy to get along with the Reds. They were simple souls, the majority of them illiterate, with high ambitions to achieve much but without the knowledge of how to do it. As I was curious, I talked with them on every possible occasion, and they immediately concluded that I was interested in their cause and wanted to learn the new ways and methods of the glorious socialist republic. I quickly gained the friendship of the assistant commissar by teaching him to sign his name, and then to read and write. He became very enthusiastic about his new knowledge. The poor fellow used to say that I had opened his blind eyes so that he had at last become a real man.

I had been with Kolchak for a short time only, and therefore my name had not been duly entered in the proper military records. During the long months of fighting, while Kolchak's army was retreating eastward, nobody thought of keeping any books whatever. Thus, the records did not reveal my identity and my name was clear. Moreover, my intimate knowledge of the Orient, coupled with my comparative youth, indicated my political innocence. I felt safe and acted accordingly. Soon I gained such confidence that my new bosses entrusted me with the purchases for the brigade at Irkutsk, which was some three hundred miles from Novo-Nikolaevsk, where we were now located.

Persistence and ingenuity were required to find the hidden goods, as free trade was prohibited. However, there were people who wanted to sell and people who wanted to buy, and both parties met somehow and somewhere in secret. I was lucky enough to locate and purchase some leather, soap, candles, tobacco, stationery, nails, horseshoes and dry goods. All was carefully packed and delivered to headquarters

and no questions were asked. Everybody was happy, especially the commissar, to whom my goods were given free of charge. I soon became buyer for the brigade, to the great delight of my new friends, myself and the contraband merchants.

Once, being tired, I took a walk to the city park of Novo-Nikolaevsk. This park was situated high up the mountain overlooking the great river Yenisei, running thousands of miles north and into the Arctic Ocean. It was quiet and peaceful in the park and I could relax from my trying role I had to play at headquarters.

On that day I noticed a lonely figure sitting in my usual place. It was a woman in a shabby coat, with a peasant's kerchief over her head. However, her posture and the thoughtfulness of her face as she watched the sunset betrayed her as belonging to the class of so-called "parasites," to whom I also belonged. As I passed her she met my eyes with surprise and anxiety. I felt that I had frightened her, and then it suddenly occurred to me that probably I had met her some time before. Long, long ago . . . maybe. I looked back in curiosity. The shabby figure was leaving the park. I called to her and she stopped, trembling. Her white lips whispered:

"Do not betray me, please. I have already paid a heavy penalty."

She was my colonel's wife. It was hard to explain to her that my imposing Red uniform did not mean that I had changed. As a matter of fact, I still considered myself an adjutant of her husband. I told her that I would like to meet the old colonel too, as I had a plan of escape as soon as spring came. She began to cry like a child, in little sobs, wiping her eyes and nose. She was trying to tell me something which I could hardly understand with so many interruptions. Finally I gathered that she was living with her parents here in Novo-Nikolaevsk, but that her husband was hiding in Irkutsk. He had been betrayed by one of their former

servants and consequently imprisoned. She used to deliver food to the cold and miserable prison every day. The hard convict labour had almost killed the old man, but finally during one of the stormy nights he had escaped. They got him a new passport under a fictitious name and he departed to Irkutsk. She gave me his address and asked me to keep in touch with her through the medium of this park. We left the park by different paths.

It happened that I had to go to Irkutsk the same evening. After I finished my shopping, I went to locate my colonel. I found the old gentleman in a small shabby house on the outskirts of the city. Not recognizing me at first, he was frightened, but when I formally reported to him and delivered the 165,000 roubles he had advanced me for the expedition to Tomsk some months previous, he understood the joke and we both laughed. He threw the worthless roubles into the fire. Not only were they worthless, they were even dangerous to keep, being another evidence against the owner of them as belonging to the parasitic class. He was childishly happy, however, when I gave him a piece of soap and some tobacco, matches and stationery. He refused my modest donation of Red money.

He treated me to a lunch consisting of boiled potatoes, black peasant bread, and tea made from dried carrots. After our meagre meal he led me into a small back room, closed the door and carefully looked out of the window into the yard. Apparently satisfied, he moved a big trunk aside and lifted a plank from the floor. He dragged out a bundle wrapped in oilcloth and put it on the table.

"Here. At last, my life's ambition has come true," he began in a whisper.

"What is it?" I asked, also in a whisper.

"You will see in a minute."

He unwrapped the bundle and spread on the table

some involved drawings with complicated mathematical calculations written in minute figures and letters in order to save paper, which had become such a luxury.

We both looked over the drawings, the colonel with great satisfaction and pride, and I in bewilderment. The colonel was always considered an authority on artillery questions, but I could not follow his scientific reasoning.

Seeing that I was in a quandary, he said :

"I have found the way to hit an unseen object with absolute precision and with a saving of fifty per cent. of the battery routine."

He was explaining the details of his research when suddenly, as if recalling something, he abruptly stopped the conversation. He wrapped everything again in a bundle, placed it under the floor and arranged the furniture as it had been before. Then wiping his forehead because of so much exertion, he said in a whisper :

"We must be careful. Even walls have ears among the soviets."

We went into another room where we filled our pipes and sat by the fire. I offered the colonel my plan of escape from Russia. We would assemble what officers we could find, and move in small groups south to Mongolia, where we would meet at Lake Koso Gol. May 1st would be the date to start. The colonel was enthusiastic and, after some discussion, he gave me the address of one of our officers in Irkutsk. Soon afterward I left, carrying with me a letter from the colonel to his wife. The letter did not contain anything compromising, as it was dangerous to write freely. However, I was instructed to acquaint the lady with our plan orally.

I went to locate another of our men, Captain Obolsky. He lived somewhere near a cemetery and I soon found the address. A fat, dirty woman declared that the man I was seeking was at work.

"Where does he work?" I asked.

"In the cemetery, of course," answered the woman blowing her nose into her unwashed apron.

"How strange!" I thought. "In the cemetery."

Once having met Obolsky, one could never forget him. He was elegance incarnate. Well bred, well dressed, well educated and with the refined manners of a gentleman, he was a typical representative of the nobility. To be sure, we sometimes thought that he overdisplayed his charms in the trenches, but as he was always pleasant and likeable, we forgave him his superiority.

It was bare and lonely in the cemetery. Snow covered the ground, and the crosses seemed to float unnaturally in long white streams. I wandered around among the graves, stumbling into holes, and over fallen monuments. At last I saw a black spot in the distance. It was Obolsky digging a grave in the frozen ground for one of his new customers. He appeared bluish-grey, half frozen in his impossible rags.

"Oh, hello there. Good morning," he greeted me as if nothing extraordinary had happened since we saw each other last. I explained my visit and he calmly answered:

"I think I can make it. How are things otherwise?"

I did not offer him my help in the way of clothing or food, for I was positive he would refuse it abruptly. No! he might die from starvation and cold, but this stubborn nobleman would not beg or complain.

I left him in perplexity. "Who is right: he or I?" I thought. "Is it better to be ploughed under because of stubbornness and conceit, or to play the game and win—at least your life? The White cause is dead for ever, and nothing can change the course of events. It is the common people themselves who will liberate the country from the Red tyranny. The time will come when they will need our education and experience

to help them reconstruct the new Russia. No, I will play my game, and I will win. I am willing to die for something worth while, but not for sheer indignation."

So I remained a Red major until spring. One morning I was awakened by a dreadful uproar. It seemed as if hundreds of batteries of artillery had begun to open fire upon us. I jumped from bed and looked outside. In the greyish light of dawn I saw that the majestic Angara River was breaking up. Huge blocks of ice were piling on top of each other, smashing everything on their way down the torrent. Dark, inky waters dashed everywhere, as if in a rage. Presently I noticed some strange objects that the river tossed to the surface. As it became lighter, I realized that they were the dead bodies of those executed and killed in battles during the winter along the shores of the river.

Several days later a ferry was established for navigation. It was a crude affair: two large flat-bottomed boats were tied together, and a platform built over them. This vehicle could slide back and forth across the river by means of a cable running from shore to shore.

On May 1st I went on another trip to Irkutsk, this time my last.

My baggage caused me considerable anxiety, as I had never before taken anything to speak of. I reduced the number of articles to the minimum so that my bag would not excite suspicion, and left it the night before with the ferryman. He put it among the rest of his luggage to be transported the next day.

I said good-bye to my fellow-workers as usual and with empty hands strolled along the street toward the harbour. I noticed that someone was following me, but was afraid to look back. When I was about to board the ferry, a gentle hand stopped me. It was a

nurse with whom I had worked on the disinfecting trips. I wondered what brought her here now.

Giving me a mysterious look, she said in an undertone :

"Comrade, I feel that you are leaving us . . . for good, and will never come back. You are not a Red, and perhaps there is some other girl waiting for you somewhere. Good-bye and good luck to you."

I had no time to answer as she walked away rapidly and soon became lost in the crowd of peasants and soldiers loitering around the ferry.

"I'll be damned!" I thought, recalling the fact that this girl was always considered an exemplary Communist. And she certainly had no personal reason for being interested in me. I had been so preoccupied with my own affairs that any thought of a love affair had never entered my mind.

Spring was in full swing. The sun shone warmly on the tender green shoots of grain. High in the heavens the migratory birds were winging their way home. The cattle, exhausted by meagre winter meals, were now in pasture. Peasants in their bright white, yellow, red and blue blouses were busy in the fields. Everything radiated gladness and vigour, the new hope born after the long, bitter winter.

But my mood quickly changed after I entered the dirty, smelly train. Only a selected few were allowed to ride in the trains, and I found this one filled with noisy, boastful barbarians in military uniforms. Several peasants were sitting in the corners, with apathetic faces. They were the people who delivered the valuable contraband, consisting of flour, eggs, butter and other food supplies. They would sell their goods at exorbitant prices to the hated parasites, who had sucked their blood for so many centuries. Since the Communist decree had annulled imperial currency, the former "rulers" paid the peasants with jewellery, mirrors, carpets and furniture, and before long

expensive Persian carpets were spread on dirty floors, Venetian mirrors hung next to harnesses, and the velvet chairs of Louis XIV stood next to huge unpainted peasant tables. Grand pianos were stored in haylofts.

My immediate neighbours on the train were several soldiers. They were relating to each other in detail, not their heroic deeds in the World War, but their marvellous accomplishments during the subsequent years of the Russian revolution—the murder of this or that nobleman or army officer. The particulars of the killings were especially amusing to them and they laughed loudly, spitting tobacco juice on the floor. They told of gentle girls from convents who were forced to clean their stables and wash their dirty underwear, of former landlords working as convicts in the filthy concentration camps, of starving merchants and manufacturers, and of former churches and cathedrals converted into dance halls and other places of amusement.

I could not hide my disgust, and my companions began to exchange significant glances. One of them disappeared. When he returned he was accompanied by a man wearing the insignia of the dreaded G.P.U., who requested me to come with him.

When we reached the vestibule of the car, he asked for my identification card. He apologized profusely when I presented the credentials of a Red major in charge of the Reconnaissance Department of the Fifth Brigade and invited me to join him in his private compartment, as "those stupid fellows can hardly appreciate the aims and ideology of real Communists." He had a good supply of food, which I supplemented with a bottle of vodka. We became very friendly after a few drinks, but I was wary, for I was sure there were soldiers posted at our door. Later, my "friend" received a telegram which apparently pleased him very much. He became exceedingly polite and even offered me his assistance in finding suitable lodgings in Irkutsk.

It occurred to me that he had probably sent a telegram to the commissar of my brigade to verify my identification and had now received a satisfactory answer.

It was Sunday when I arrived at my destination, and all offices were closed. Since accommodation at either a hotel or a private house was obtainable only through the office of the commandant, and this office also was closed, I decided to locate an adjutant somewhere in the city. I hired a cab, offering a box of matches for fare. It was a fruitless search and had cost me two more boxes of matches when the three of us stopped exhausted and discouraged—the horse, the driver and myself. The old man understood my predicament and, probably to get rid of me, he suggested :

“ Perhaps I can oblige you at my house if you’ll give me a glassful of tobacco.”

The deal was soon closed and we started toward the suburbs. We stopped in front of a little hut painted white and green. After the horses had been taken care of we entered the house. The driver’s family was at their farm some forty miles north and we were alone in this warm, clean little place, that reminded me so poignantly of the old days, before catastrophe had brought our motherland low.

As I stood musing before the fireplace, I felt a heavy, friendly arm on my shoulder. I turned my head and met the sorrowful eyes of the cab driver.

“ I understand,” he said slowly in an undertone. After a moment he continued :

“ I’m sorry, but I already have four White officers hidden at my farm and can take no more.”

I was silent. The old man filled his pipe, picked up a small coal in his bare fingers and put it on top of the tobacco. He drew several puffs and then said :

“ I have a friend, a hunter, in Malinovka, about fifteen miles south of here. You go there and tell him I sent you. Maybe he can direct you to another hunter, and thus you could travel to the Mongolian

border. God willing, you can cross the Sayan ridge and be safe."

We had a good supper, avoiding any mention of my plans for the next day. After a while the old man spread a huge hide of a black Siberian bear on the floor.

"Here," he said. "Put your head on the bear's and go to sleep. The morning is much wiser than the night. God bless you, son."

I fell asleep immediately and in a strange dream saw Russia breaking up and tossing human bodies about, as had the Angara, and I was one of the drowning. Before I took my last breath, I shouted with all my strength :

"Farewell, my beloved Russia."

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PART III

ESCAPE TO MONGOLIA

I

AT four o'clock the next morning I got up and dressed in a German uniform which I had bought from a war prisoner at Krasnoyarsk. It was imperative that I should leave the city at dawn, when the Red sentries would be less watchful.

For fear that early smoke from the chimney might attract attention, I did not make tea, and my breakfast consisted only of a piece of bread and a glass of milk. My Red uniform and other articles I could not take I placed on the table, and left a little money with a note thanking the old driver. Then I cautiously opened the door into the yard.

It was a dark and threatening day, May 3rd. An armada of huge black clouds massed the skies, and in the far distance there were bright zigzags of lightning and the dull roar of thunder. I raised the collar of my coat and, lifting my military bag containing some food, tools, matches and a dagger, I found myself in the deserted street. Instinctively, I leaned against the friendly wall of the hut, so safe and secure. I was voluntarily making myself a fugitive by leaving my lodgings at this early hour, dressed in foreign uniform and with a forged passport. Any casual passer-by might betray me and deliver me to the G.P.U. I should be court-martialled and shot. I stood there silently for a few moments, reflecting on these gloomy possibilities, then crossed myself and hurried along the empty street.

It was raining when I finally reached the ferry. Peasants were sleeping in the wagons already on the platform. No doubt they were returning home after trading in the market place. Unnoticed, I sat down by the dirty wheels of one of the wagons and, hiding my face in my knees, pretended to be asleep. Long moments passed while I went through mental agony, but finally the ferryman untied the boat and began to pull it by a rusty, wet cable and we moved slowly into the dark Irkut River. A chilling mist covered the surface of the stream and we soon lost sight of the shores. Through the fog I saw, for a moment, the outline of a railroad bridge across the river and the black silhouette of a Red soldier, with his head hidden deeply in the high collar of his military overcoat.

The ferry jerked and squeaked as it touched the opposite side. Wooden planks were thrown to shore and the peasants' wagons slowly moved. I moved out with them. The road in front of us led toward the forest. The caravan increased its speed and soon the horses broke into a trot. Since I could not keep pace with them, I tried to jump into one of the empty wagons. To my great surprise, the sleepy drivers suddenly seemed to wake up and began furiously whipping the animals, so that I was soon left far behind on the road. Apparently they had taken me for a highway robber.

I had heard stories of the bloodhounds used to hunt down deserters in hills and forests around big cities and I knew that I must take some precautions. Fortunately a stream ran close by and I took off my shoes and began wading in the water. In fifteen miles there would be the village, Malinovka, at the outskirts of which lived Alexei, the friend of the cab driver. I would see him for further information and direction.

It was an unpleasant walk in the ice-cold water, with mud, stones, fallen trees and treacherous cliffs hindering my progress. The first rays of the sun were

very welcome. The clouds were gone by now, and the day promised to be warm. To my left was a picturesque little village. Smoke was rising from several chimneys. Apparently breakfast was being prepared, but, alas, not for me. I sat on a protruding stone, got out my bread and soon finished my meal.

Suddenly footsteps crackled through the underbrush. I grabbed a dagger and turned toward my unseen enemy. With my heart pounding, I listened intently. All was quiet and then I heard a merry laugh :

"What can you do against my rifle?" a voice said. "Put away your little toy. I like your spirit, though, and perhaps you'll do."

A huge man, dressed in rags and carrying a rifle, appeared in an opening. From a distance he looked me over critically.

"Soldier, eh? That's good. Come along with me . . . in front. March! Step lively or I'll shoot."

We climbed a steep cliff, from which there was a magnificent view over a wide territory. I had observed that my captor was not a Red: at least he did not wear the Red uniform and he was not directing me toward the village. Neither did he appear to be a White. "Who is he?" I wondered.

We descended a narrow path until a big rock blocked our way. Then my companion whistled a signal and we stood there until we received a similar signal in reply. A stranger, apparently a guard, appeared and exchanged a few unintelligible remarks with my captor and then disappeared. We climbed over several fallen trees and suddenly came out on a cleared plateau under huge overhanging rocks. Seven or eight men were sitting round a fire eating breakfast. To their right I noticed the dark opening of a cave.

Immediately they surrounded me in a gay crowd, examining my arms, shoulders and legs, and nodding approvingly. My companion seemed to be their leader, and the whole bunch proved to be nothing more or

less than a gang of robbers. At last the leader asked for silence and turned toward me.

"You know who we are. You may join us if you wish, and if you don't wish we will hang you. And no tricks."

After a few minutes of deep thinking, he added: "Our entrance fee will be a cow, which you must steal to prove that you are worthy of us. Tonight we will visit Malinovka. Now, give him a bowl of soup, fellows."

The situation, though unpleasant, was not without humour, and I couldn't help thinking: "What a career! A student of consular subjects, an officer in the Imperial army, a Red major, and now an ordinary bandit."

Late that evening, with guns aimed at me from behind the bushes, I stole a "nice little cow." The poor thing did not live long, for we ate her flesh for supper and a supply of beef was then salted and smoked and stored in the cave. We had some vodka and soon all but the guard were asleep.

I was awakened about two in the morning by the terrific cold. The moon was playing hide and seek with the clouds. The alternating darkness and brightness made the surroundings seem fantastic. The river below shone like a giant sabre, and in the stillness I could hear the sound of flowing water.

The guard was sleeping across the narrow passageway wrapped in his big fur coat and firmly holding his gun. To be sure that he would have a good night's rest, I stroked his forehead with a heavy piece of firewood. This handicap removed, I silently descended the steep cliff, holding desperately to every projection. After about half an hour I reached the river bank, where with painstaking effort I succeeded in tearing loose a big log. I fastened to it my clothing and bag pushed it into the river, swimming beside it.

Meanwhile the bandits discovered my absence and bullets were soon spattering the water around me, occasionally splitting the wood of the log. However, I reached the opposite shore safely, dressed myself and hurried toward the east. There was no pursuit.

At daybreak I saw a railroad track and knew that I was safe from the bandits at least. The distant barking of a dog indicated that a village was close at hand. Presently, I found a haystack, on which I curled up like a dog and fell into a heavy sleep. Malinovka with Alexei out of the question, I had to work out a new scheme. But that problem I left for the morrow. How nice and warm and windless it was in that haystack.

Later that day I emerged dirty and unshaven, looking like a tramp. After I had cleaned myself with some difficulty, I moved toward the village.

The sun was already high and peasants were working in the fields, so I did not expect to meet anyone in the village except those either too old or too young to work. I decided to assume the role of a war prisoner coming to the country in search of some odd jobs, as the cities were too crowded and there was too much competition for a poor fellow like me. I had no money; how could a poor prisoner, who suffered so much because of the hated imperialism, have any? As soon as I could accumulate a little money, I would go to preach communism in my native country, Germany. Down with capitalism, down with landowners, down with bosses! Proletarians of the world, unite!

I was almost certain to have a lot of sympathy, some work and transportation. Merrily whistling a tune—"Ach, Du Lieber Augustin,"—I entered the only street of the village. I noticed a woman in a window apparently having difficulty with her sewing machine. I told the "baba" that if she would feed me I would repair her machine. The deal was closed,

the machine cleaned and oiled and my stomach filled with pancakes, honey and milk.

By evening I reached another village where I repaired an old pram, which some loving father had brought home from the city in exchange for a small sack of flour. I was paid for my labour with supper and lodgings for the night in the barn with the horses and cows. Early next morning, after stealing some milk from the cows, I moved on east. Thus, selling my ingenuity as I went along, I reached the city of Kultuk in a few days. This town, situated at the southern end of Lake Baikal, is a junction point where the railroad enters numerous tunnels under the Baikal Mountains, beyond which lies Transbaikalia. The mountains were impassable at that early season and I had to abandon this way of escape.

Another road goes from Kultuk in a south-western direction. This road was an old caravan trail that connected Irkutsk with Mongolia. Semi-civilised Mongolian tribes of Buriats inhabited this region. The science of anthropology traces them to the original tribes of the great Genghis Khan. They occupied themselves partly in agriculture, partly in hunting, but mainly in cattle raising. Retaining their nomadic habits, they migrated back and forth through their reservations in summer, but always returned to their permanent winter camps, where they stored some hay, placed their cattle in strong corrals, and lived through the cold season in warm wooden yurts. Many of the Buriats intermingled through marriage with their conquerors, the Russian Cossacks, and formed the so-called Zabaikaltsi, of whom General Semenov was a representative and a leader.

My career as a war prisoner came to a critical test at Kultuk. Usually I entered the first house at the outskirts of the villages. I had not realized, however, that Kultuk, being an important strategical point, would be densely populated with troops. As I opened

the door of the first hut, I found myself in the midst of Red soldiers. Was I scared? That is too small a word to describe my feelings. I stared at them as a helpless rabbit stares at an approaching snake.

My life was at stake. It was utterly impossible to run away, and again, what else could I do under the circumstances? How could I explain my presence here, my identity? Wild thoughts crowded my mind while I stood motionless, staring at my enemies. A loud voice woke me up:

"Who the hell are you, and what do you want?"

Well, I was a poor proletarian, crushed by hated militarism. Now I was trying to get some work in order to keep body and soul together.

"German prisoner, eh?" asked another fellow, and then he added boastfully:

"I was a prisoner myself in Germany during the war."

He looked at me with curiosity, in which I could read satisfaction that at last he saw a man going through the same hell he had experienced a short time before. In order to impress his friends, he addressed me in the few words of German he had picked up in a concentration camp during the war. I knew German well and could answer with the ease of a native. Immediately he withdrew, and I did not insist on continuing in a language foreign to everyone present, including the learned linguist himself. He appreciated my tactics in not jeopardizing his superiority among his fellow soldiers. Noisily he dragged a heavy unpainted stool to the table and ordered a woman to get me a bowl of borsch.

As the Reds had finished their meal, they retired to the yard for a smoke. I remained alone and felt somewhat happier. My hostess informed me casually that all roads and bridges were guarded by soldiers and that it was impossible to enter or leave the settlement without due permission from the authorities

"We are too close to the border, you know," she added somewhat apologetically.

Thus, in an indifferent fashion, she supplied me with valuable information. I did not say a word. When I finished the borsch, the woman placed in front of me a big bowl of black buckwheat mush with a generous amount of bacon on top, and went to another room to attend to other housekeeping tasks.

A new problem presented itself when I had eaten my excellent meal. How get away from this hospitable but dangerous spot? As a solution was beyond my abilities, I decided to let things run their own course, and to be on my guard to grasp any opportunity that might present itself. Carefully lifting my bag, I advanced toward the entrance. If only I could make the gates and reach the street.

When I came to a dark passage leading into the yard, my bag was grabbed out of my hands. The soldiers opened it and began packing into it soap, bread, tobacco and something else I could not distinguish. Those were my new friends, Red soldiers, who in sympathy toward a suffering comrade from Germany parted with their meagre supplies. The fellow who spoke German was especially active. He declared that he wanted to inspect the sentries at the exit from Kultuk and also at the bridge. As it turned out, he just wanted to see me pass through the guards safely.

That day I rode in the cab of a Buriat, who was glad to get away from Kultuk in such an easy and unexpected fashion. The road was wide and well defined by centuries of usage. Annually large herds of cattle from Inner Mongolia move north up this road. They make ten to fifteen miles a day, feeding on pastures along the road, and when they reach Siberia they are fat and command good prices. They enter at a narrow mountain pass at the sacred Lake Koso Gol. Mundi is the first little Russian town they

meet. Shinki is the second and larger trading post. Tunka is the capital of the district ; then come Tora, Kultuk, and at last Irkutsk, where large packing houses receive all the cattle. This road formed the famous Tunkinsky Track, which was important even at the time of Genghis Khan.

Many Russian merchants annually sent their buyers into Mongolia. Cheap calico, salt, cheap brick tea, and various items of bric-a-brac formed the medium of exchange, although sometimes the price was paid in weighted silver or Russian currency. Many other merchants lived in Mongolia, forming small but prosperous Russian colonies with stores, schools, bath-houses and large ranches. The great majority of them were Whites, or monarchists, who hated the Bolsheviks for stopping their profitable trade with Russia. They found redress in foreign trade, of which the American firm of Anderson and Myers has been a leading buyer. This firm had a branch office in Urga, the capital of Mongolia.

I entertained great hopes, if I could only make my escape to Mongolia. At the first settlement we reached, the Buriat stopped at the yurt where he lived. He did not invite me in ; he was suspicious of the kindness of the Bolsheviks in Kultuk. On the other hand, I did not feel confidence in my driver either. This fellow was, no doubt, a contrabandist and could make a lot of trouble if he wished. So, we parted in a friendly, though insincere, fashion.

It was too early to end my day's travel, and I decided to continue on foot. But it was a different matter, being all alone again. In the cab I had the legitimate excuse of "returning home," but Red patrols would not believe such a tale when they saw me on foot. Most probably they would arrest me and deliver me to their headquarters. Or perhaps they would shoot me on the spot to avoid an elaborate trial. As I was definitely opposed to both sides, I

resolved to proceed through the bushes at the side of the road.

It began to rain again, another of those spring storms with lightning and thunder. I was glad because everybody took refuge somewhere and I could proceed unhampered. Only once did I meet a military wagon and immediately hid behind the bushes. The Reds, wrapped in their military overcoats, did not pay the slightest attention to the road. Another time a Buriat rode by on his pony, and I jumped under a near-by bridge. Gradually the day faded into evening. The storm continued and I longed for the haven some village might provide. Suddenly I heard the distant barking of a dog. It was the indifferent and lazy barking of a creature shut up in a barn. To me it indicated that I would soon reach a habitation with all that it implies to a wet, tired and hungry traveller. However, I had no illusion that anybody would let me in in my present condition, so when I came across a deserted and half-ruined barn, I decided to stay there for the night.

I took off my clothing, squeezed out all the water I could and then pulled the wet garments on again. I was too tired to be particular and fell asleep immediately.

A bright sun woke me up next morning. I looked outside and found myself in a large Buriat winter village. It was deserted and I felt like a ghost in that dead settlement. Apparently there was a regular village of Russians somewhere in the neighbourhood, for I heard again the barking of the same dog.

"Well, we might as well have our breakfast," I resolved cheerfully. But I was greatly disappointed. My bread was dissolved into mush, well mixed with tobacco, matches and soap. I could hardly find my tools. With difficulty I cleaned them, emptied the bag and wiped it thoroughly with hay, packed my tools again, and without breakfast or supplies began

another day's journey. In about half an hour I found myself above a wide valley with a shiny white village below. The valley gradually descended toward a forest. Not far from me stood a lonely hut in the midst of a vegetable garden. A little girl about ten years old was busily engaged in planting something.

I stood motionless in silent admiration of the delightful picture. The diamonds of last night's rain shone brilliantly in the bright, warm sunshine. The pigeons were cooing on the roof, and the girl was singing a naïve melody of happy youth. Tall, bushy sunflowers hid me from her sight.

Suddenly I heard the girl scream. She had noticed me at last and ran in terror toward the hut, holding her skirts high with both hands. I could hear her saying: "Whites! Whites are here." Two very old women ran out of the door. One of them placed her wrinkled hand on the girl's mouth, ordering her to "Shut up," as other people might overhear. She then motioned me in. There was nobody there except these two old women. They kept house alone with their grandchild, an orphan. They hurried to put a meal on the table and then, with tears in their eyes, watched me eat. Such a display of real Christianity I had never seen. "If only I had a magic carpet to take you to Mongolia," sighed one of them in sorrow and sympathy.

They gave me a blanket made of many bright pieces of cloth and told me to undress and wrap myself in it. Then they directed me to the top of the big Russian oven for a nap while my clothing was drying inside. I slept till late in the afternoon, when again I was fed with a modest but plentiful meal. It appeared that the old women had sent the girl for their nephew, a hunter. He was to instruct me how to reach Mongolia. The hunter arrived by nightfall. He was a huge, black creature, forbidding in appearance. He looked me over critically and suspiciously.

Satisfied, he gave me the name of a friend in Tora, also a hunter and a reliable man. His name was Tihon, and he was a Cossack.

I offered the hunter my dagger in gratitude for his help. He silently looked at it for a few moments and then pulled out his simple hunting knife.

"Take this. You'll need something with you in the mountains. You can't tell what you may meet there."

Then he said good-bye to his aunts and left the hut as silently as he had appeared.

On the way to Tora I came to a mountain river. It could not be crossed on foot, as the current was too strong and the river too wide. There was a shabby village bridge and I decided to walk across it since I didn't see the usual guard. In the semi-darkness, objects could hardly be distinguished. The stars were getting pale; and early birds were already on the wing. A feeling of tranquil happiness descended upon me. Soon I would be at Tora. Mongolia was now only two or three hundred miles on this road. Probably it would take me a week or ten days to cover the distance, and then I would see my friends again at the Koso Gol. I looked to my left. The dark and severe mountains of Sayan rose high in the pale sky. Nobody but experienced hunters would dare enter those treacherous heights. "Well, I'll talk about it with my friend-to-be, Tihon."

All of a sudden I fell over a sleeping figure in the middle of the bridge. It was a Red guard. The soldier grabbed his gun, and I thought for a moment that everything was lost. Then I jumped to my feet and aimed a terrific blow at his jaw. He lost his balance and the rifle fell into the stream. He tried to pull out his dagger, but again my blow stopped the attack. We began to fight with fists, and I soon found that my enemy was at a disadvantage, as he wore a heavy coat and ammunition. He fell to the ground

again and I grabbed his head by his thick hair and struck it several times against the sharp edges of the bridge. He lost consciousness. With great effort I lifted the heavy body and threw it over the parapet and into the river. It caught him in its strong current and began tossing him like a ball. He struck a big rock and I saw red blood colouring the waves. For a few more minutes the body was visible, and then it disappeared, carried into a whirlpool.

I was exhausted, and felt dreadfully sleepy. With difficulty, I washed my bloody face in the cold stream at the other end of the bridge and for a while lay motionless on the bank.

It was now too light to stay on the road so I entered the forest, moving in the direction of some smoke rising into the morning sky. Soon another valley opened before me. Cattle were in pasture, and at the edge of the forest across the valley stood a small grey yurt. Smoke was coming out of the opening in the roof.

The Buriats hated Communists, with their generous promises of plentiful food, clothing and free lands some time in the future. The present generation, however, had nothing to eat, nothing to wear and no free lands. Moreover, the Bolsheviks mobilized their holy lamas for labour on the roads and forests. Their temples and monasteries were deserted and their yurts empty of the bare necessities of life.

I went round the valley, hiding among the trees, and soon came to the yurts. At the front of one of them, by the small door painted bright red, an old man was sitting with his feet tucked under him, smoking a long Chinese pipe. His eyes were closed and he seemed to be dreaming in the warmth and brightness of the morning sunshine.

"Amorchan sain beina," I greeted the old man in a polite undertone, so that he would not be frightened. He opened his eyes, looked at me for a few minutes in silence, and answered slowly and quietly :

"Sain irrechi beina . . . Glad to see you."

I lighted my pipe and gave it to him. He gave me his.

"Tsagan Urus? . . . White Russian?"

"Tsagan beina," I answered. "Khathyl yabana . . . Travelling to Khathyl."

"Om mani padme hum . . . Oh, the Jewel in the Lotus," said the old man in prayer and shook his white head in grief.

We entered his yurt. He offered me tea and some cheese. On my question regarding Tihon, he replied that the fellow was away hunting with his son and that they would stay up in the mountains for a month or so. He also warned me to be careful on the roads. Many Buriats were leaving for Mongolia with their cattle and the frontier was being carefully guarded. It was impossible to reach Khathyl or any other Mongolian place by the road. Sooner or later the Reds would catch me.

"You have to go through the Sayan Mountains," he said gravely. After a few minutes of thinking, he added significantly, "But you cannot cross them alone. You would be lost in no time. Better wait until somebody is travelling over. Then you can join him and be safe."

I learned further that it takes ten days on horseback to make that trip across the Sayan to Sanga, an important Russian settlement about thirty miles from Mongolia.

The old man looked at me thoughtfully, as if measuring me, and then he pulled from a shelf a clean mutton shoulder bone and placed it on the hot ashes. The bone quickly cracked in various zigzags. He pulled it out and examined it carefully. After a few minutes of silence, he slowly began to tell my fortune:

"I see your future. It is dark and death is watching you on many roads. Men are more dangerous than the beasts in the forests, and among all men fear your

friends, the Whites. Your worst enemy will be a man with a 'wet' eye, but you will kill him. You will come through many experiences and hardships, but patience and labour will do a great deal for you and alter the circumstances. Remember that within yourself deliverance must be sought, as the great Buddha teaches. You will reach your home safely after the earth has completed two yearly cycles. Kale-pe-a . . . Go slowly. Good-bye to you."

I smiled at the old man occupied so seriously with his fortune-telling. However, I thanked him kindly and made my departure. Once again in the forest, I made a bed of fragrant branches and threw myself down to rest.

"Kale-pe-a," I whispered and fell asleep.

2

That night I resumed my trip. As an additional precaution against any consequences of my fight with the Red guard, I descended to one of the numerous creeks and travelled through the water for long hours, until I was sure that bloodhounds would be unable to scent my footsteps. The creek led me to the very slopes of the wild Sayan Mountains. I climbed the first hill and looked round. Far to the west I saw the dim outlines of the village of Tora. I sat on the grass, leaning against a big fir tree, and gazed at the beautiful panorama until I dozed off.

When I reached Tora I sought refuge in the poorest hut on the outskirts of the village. I had learned long ago that it was easier to find hospitality among the very poor.

For a little money these people agreed to board me until I could find some gainful occupation and settle at my own housekeeping. For lack of room in the house, I had to sleep in an old barn.

Cautiously I inquired about the Tunkinsky Track. The old lama was right : the direct road to Koso Gol was blocked by numerous Red military posts. I should have to take the other route, across the Sayan. However, to go alone was suicide, so I tried to find out if there were any others in Tora who intended to escape from Russia by the same route. This was a delicate task, because as soon as I uncovered my intentions some alert fellow might report me to the authorities.

The morning of the third day I knocked at the door of one of the small houses.

"Come in," answered a harsh voice. Inside I saw a man who had just arisen from his bed. He looked out the window as if observing the weather.

"What do you want ?" he asked at last.

He had a long, pale face, delicate features and an intelligent expression. His eyes especially were striking, filled as they were with that kind of melancholy which is the residue of long and terrible sufferings.

"I wish some kind of work, sir," I replied in my usual humble fashion, which I found was what people liked best. "I can repair harness, wagons, overhaul the farm machinery, and look after cattle."

"Well—hmm—can you read and write ?"

"Yes, sir, a little."

"Then come with me : few people can do that in this hole."

The man gulped his tea, took two or three bites of bread and we went outside. He hurried along the street so rapidly that I could hardly follow him. At last he turned into a large building which bore a sign : "Commissariat." People on the stairway bowed respectfully, and those in the hall quickly gave way to him. I could see that my new friend was a person of some importance here. He proved to be the commissar of the district. Although Tunka was the main town, Tora was the governmental seat.

We entered a small, crowded office, where the commissar stopped at the desk of a fat young Buriat and said :

"Here. He will help you." He requested my passport and disappeared into his private office adjoining the main hall.

"Djambolon Bardji," the Buriat introduced himself to me in the charming fashion of the best drawing rooms.

The meaning of his name made me smile inwardly. "Glad to meet you, Mr. Banjo," I replied humbly. "My name is Wilhelm Hans Hinkle," and I felt avenged by giving him another impossible name.

As a man of a certain social standing, he immediately began to complain of the backwardness of the people surrounding him. He mentioned significantly that he had graduated from a grammar school. That was too much for me, indeed, so I cast my eyes down and sighed heavily. Not many of us could boast of such an achievement. I told him so. Banjo informed me further that he did not intend to stop there. On the contrary, he had just received some wonderful books from Irkutsk and was going to study some more.

"Trigonometry, for example, is an interesting subject, don't you think ? "

"Oh, yes," I answered, "I know something of that science. Very fascinating, indeed."

"Perhaps you can help me on the trigonometry then," Banjo suggested.

"Most willingly, sir," I replied.

At last we turned to business, now that his reputation as an advanced and highly civilized person was duly impressed upon me. I was to handle the "Book of Records." Marriages, divorces, births and deaths were all under my supervision. In each case I had to give a licence and collect a fee. And in the evening we would study trigonometry in this land of nomads.

In a week's time this simple soul extended to me his

unlimited trust and friendship. He appointed me to be his assistant in charge of the "Culture-Enlightening Department," which included a library, local theatres, cinemas, propaganda instructions, all schools and public lectures. We had also to teach the nomads how to pasture their cattle and milk their cows with better efficiency. Well, this was amusing, to say the least.

After two weeks the commissar called me to his private study and asked whether I knew something about Law. On my negative reply, he nodded approvingly: "Good." He was going to appoint me a justice of the peace, and it was well that I was not versed in the intricacies of "capitalistic" Law. Now he would know that I would not be handicapped in exercising my "revolutionary consciousness," which alone was to direct me in my new duties.

The commissar was a puzzle to me and therefore I asked Banjo about him. It appeared that the man was a famous political convict, who had spent twenty-five years in prisons in Siberia. He ran away many times, and each time was recaptured and finally sent to a penitentiary for hard labour. He was somehow related to the nobility, which he had come to hate with his whole heart.

Since all houses in Tora were already occupied by officials, I was assigned to live with a Buriat chieftain in one of his yurts. He had several children, whom I had to teach Russian manners and enlighten with regard to the Russian alphabet. His big wooden yurts were connected by covered passages, making them look like a modern habitation of several rooms. It certainly was a departure from the ancient Buriat custom, but he wanted to be "civilized."

I slept with the children: three boys and two girls. They were quite noisy, especially in the evenings, when they danced round the open fire, singing their wild nomad songs. Those were peculiar dances, as the boys and girls undressed themselves completely,

according to the custom. It was considered the best way of getting rid of fleas for the night.

The younger daughter, about thirteen years of age, whose name I could never repeat, made a habit of inspecting my food bag and helping herself to whatever she liked. I confess, the visits of the little girl annoyed me. After all, our entire monthly allowance of food consisted of only five pounds of heavy black bread, a pound and a half of meat, one box of matches, one herring and one glassful of cheap tobacco. It is true that we were allowed to fish in our spare time, but then we had to deliver as a fee thirteen pounds of fish a month, which we never could catch in a small river. The catching of fish secretly at night was an art which I could never master.

My duties as a "master of marriage and divorce" and as a judge brought me into close contact with the Buriats. These nomads lived a simple life and I soon became famous as Solomon. Indeed, I could catch a crook without much difficulty and punish him to the satisfaction and joy of many. The poor inhabitants would visit me and relate all their troubles and I soon learned all I wanted about the district. The Sayan became an even more dreadful place to enter alone. Many times a hunter would be carried down the stream and into the village, his body just a sack of bones. The rapids which he attempted to cross would sweep him off his feet and toss him to death on the sharp rocks before he realized what had happened.

I waited for Tihon. It seemed that only he could solve my problem. Of course, I could elevate myself to the position of, say, a school superintendent and visit Mundi, a village at the end of the Tunkinsky Track and at the very border of Mongolia. However, the promotion was hard to get as the Reds needed me at Tora for more responsible occupations.

At last Tihon came. The same evening and before I

could see him, he killed all four Reds who were stationed in his house and then ran back into the mountains.

The morning after the killing, my young girl friend woke me up and, with great anxiety, related the events of the night before. She told me that this time Tora would certainly be penalized as the inhabitants had displayed their antagonism toward the communists many times, and the Reds disliked all Buriats. They would never let this murder pass unpunished.

"God knows what they will do to all of us. Look out, Altin Shoot," she said gravely. This last was my new name, "Golden Tooth," in honour of a gold crown I wore over one of my teeth.

And indeed, at the "peak shining" hour, using a Buriat expression, a horde of Red cavalry invaded Tora. They were terrifying-looking creatures, dressed in dirty uniforms and wearing immense papahas, or sheep-skin hats. These papahas were so large that they covered the shoulders of the riders. Two cartridge belts were hung crosswise on their chests and one around the waist. Short cavalry carbines, long curved swords, vicious daggers and whips were their weapons. Those whips contained a steel thread interwoven in the leather so that a single strike cut the flesh into an unhealing and agonizing wound. The men rode Siberian ponies, tireless in covering long distances, expert in climbing high rocks, and fearless in penetrating jungles and swamps.

Every living being hid from the unwelcome guests. It was as still as before a hurricane. Oil lamps were lighted before Buddhas, and children began chanting their prayers. I noticed tears in the eyes of my little friend as she said her "sain beina" when I left for the office.

One of the men in our employ, in charge of correspondence, formerly had been a governor of Ufa province in European Russia. His wife was killed during the revolution, and he and his young daughter

moved to Siberia, where nobody knew them, with the idea of finally escaping from Russia. They lived in a little hut on the shore of a small local river. He was an expert in night fishing and was able not only to supply himself with fish, but also with flour, meat and other necessities of life in exchange for the surplus of his catch. He kept my maps and diary in a hole in his floor. I went to see him first.

I found him also alarmed, and we immediately left for the office. Hurriedly he went through his correspondence and then called me to read some new instructions from Irkutsk. They emphatically stated that Tora and the whole Buriat district must be thoroughly cleansed of all suspicious elements. The following phrase was underlined with a thick red pencil: "Judge by appearance, not by passports."

"So," said my friend, looking at me significantly.

"So," I answered him encouragingly, as if I knew the answer to our new dilemma. I felt no hesitation, for there was no alternative but to run away, since in this land of nomads all others were under suspicion, especially those who had clean hands and good manners. I was glad that fate itself had finally forced us to make a decision and end the misery of living in the Soviet.

"South," I said laconically.

"My daughter?" answered the man in pitiful anxiety.

People began to arrive at the office, and I whispered to him, "Ferry . . . to-morrow morning."

It was Saturday and a short workday. The news of the new circular soon became known, and we noticed peculiar looks which the majority of the employees were casting at us, as if we were condemned already.

My young friend was waiting for me at home. She took me outside to a far corner of the corral, where last year's hay was still in storage.

"Altin Shoot, a bag is there for you," she said

proudly. "Bread and a knife, matches and a little beef tea and salt. That's all I could get you. You leave to-morrow. It will be Sunday the ninth, a lucky day. Climb a high cliff above the ferry and you'll find a small path. Father uses it for his contraband traffic. Keep on it all the time, and it will lead you to Mongolia. Don't be afraid, as I will be praying for you. Kale-pe-a."

"Kale-pe-a," I answered the little girl, moved by her concern for my safety.

Fearing arrest, I left the house immediately to "fish in the river." This was to serve as an explanation of my absence to any authorities who might inquire my whereabouts. On my way to the river, I stopped at the Ufa governor's house. He was feverishly packing. His daughter, Anastasya, was pale, but determined. She was glad to go and she dismissed all dangers of the trip across the Sayan.

"Better to die in the Sayan than to die in the torture chambers of the G.P.U.," and she expressed the sentiments of all of us. We agreed to meet near the ferry the next morning at dawn.

All eight oil lanterns were burning in front of the calm face of Buddha that night when I finally came home. The children went to bed early without the usual singing and dancing. When my little friend heard me arrive, she got up and began her prayers. She said a thousand times the all-powerful formula: Om mani padme hum, to correspond to the Lord's thousand images in the Holy Book; and she told her rosary of 108 beads, which represented the 108 books of the Buddhist scripture.

It took her at least half an hour to finish her elaborate prayer, after which she hung a charm round my neck to keep me from danger. Sleepy and exhausted, the little girl lay down on her bed and stared at me until her eyelids became heavy and she fell asleep.

About four o'clock in the morning I was up. Thick, milky fog enveloped the ground. I fixed a knife to my

belt, lifted my bag to my shoulders, and crossed myself, as was the custom in Russia before one started a trip. Outside the hut I took a few hesitant steps forward. Nothing could be seen ; I was alone in that enveloping sea of fog. Again I crossed myself, then set out resolutely in the direction of the ferry, about twelve miles away. Faster and faster I walked, until I found myself running.

" Well, here we go," I said, and jumping over a little ditch, entered the dark, unfriendly " tundra."

My progress was blocked by fallen trees and thick underbrush. For about an hour I struggled feverishly and then sat down exhausted. It became lighter, and the danger of being exposed increased. Running and walking, I covered half the distance. A little, enclosed pasture opened in front of me, and I saw a small hut. Smoke rose from its chimney, and a Red soldier was in front of the hut washing his face and neck in a big wooden bowl. He had just arisen, a young fellow, happy to be alive, ready for love and battle. He was snorting and shouting, splashing himself with the ice-cold water. And I! . . . an outlaw, whom anybody would shoot at sight like a mad dog.

Cautiously crawling on all fours, I finally crossed the opening and entered the bushes, running and walking by turn as before. About a mile from the ferry I suddenly heard a cavalcade of galloping horses. I was caught in the open and could not hide. They were three Buriats. They gained on me quickly and jumped to the ground. One of them threw a rope round my shoulders. The others covered me with their guns.

They told me that they were to catch and bring back anybody whom they met on the road and that I would have to go with them. One of the men recognized me, however, and I assumed a tone of great indignation at being arrested like that, and on Sunday especially, when everyone was allowed to spend his time as he liked.

"You'll come to my court sometime and don't ask mercy from me then," I threatened. "I certainly will see that you are punished for this treatment of your own judge." I finally convinced them that in my case they would have to make an exception. Humbly apologizing, they galloped away.

I stood for a moment watching them, hardly believing my own eyes. In front of me was a little, well-hidden footpath winding up the hill. Sometimes it would disappear entirely, but then it would be seen again. Painfully I climbed several thousand feet until I could see the ferry far below. I had found the contraband road that led to Mongolia!

It was the rainy season. The dark-grey clouds indicated that it would rain for several days. The ground soon became sodden and I could hardly distinguish the path, which led me higher and higher until I reached a plateau covered with thick grass. Here was the appointed meeting place, and I stopped, looking for the governor and his daughter. They were not there.

Later, in Mongolia, I met them again. The night our conspiracy was planned they changed their minds and, for some of their jewellery, hired a Buriat to take them safely to Mongolia through Mindi. It took them only three days to make the trip.

Loneliness came over me and my heart sank. I knew all roads were patrolled by Buriats who were anxious now to prove their loyalty to the Bolsheviks. There was little chance of escaping them. To-morrow the commissar would learn of my escape and send out a party with bloodhounds to pick up my trail.

However, there were several factors to my advantage: First, it was Sunday and that gave me a full day's start; second, I was on a little-known trail; the third and most important advantage lay in this unholy, rainy weather. If the rain continued for several days, all my footprints would be obliterated, and the dogs

would not be able to scent me. As an additional precaution, I decided to move through the treacherous marshes of rusty-red, smelly water.

The cruel persistence of the misty rain was almost unbearable. It penetrated to the very bone. My advance was slow and laborious. Before long all my muscles became numb, and I pushed on blindly like an automaton.

After three days of floundering through mud and water, over slippery rocks and fallen trees, my shoes gave out and I had to tie the soles on with rope. My feet became infected and badly swollen and I moved them as if they were chunks of wood. I lost all sensation, even of hunger. Everything seemed to be one wet, slippery, cold nightmare. Only at night, when I would crawl under a fallen tree and surround myself with fragrant fir branches, could I be somewhat comfortable. Then I would cover my head with my wet coat and, breathing the stuffy air, full of the odour of dirty cloth and my rotting boots, fall into the sleep of exhaustion.

My supplies did not fare well in the penetrating rain. The matches were gone. I apportioned the food in small rations for every day, but the time arrived when I began to starve. By the fourth day, I was eating mushrooms, berries and sweet, wild onions. All that memorable day I walked up the high slope, hoping that on the other side of the mountains I would see a valley. After desperate efforts, I reached the high plateau with a wonderful view of a narrow, wild canyon. Descent was impossible, for I was afraid of rolling with the pebbles down the steep canyon to my death, so I sat at the very edge in complete exhaustion and despair. I was tempted to plunge headlong into the gorge. The whole day's hiking was lost and I would have to go back and choose another direction. Bitter tears filled my eyes. With great difficulty, I rose to my feet and apathetically retraced my steps.

When, at last I threw myself down to sleep that night, I did not care if I never woke. My heart was filled with the longing for death.

When I awoke the next morning, the first thing that struck me was that it had stopped raining. High above me a fir tree towered into the sky. Its shiny metallic needles were tinkling like tiny bells. A huge Christmas tree stood close by. It stood silently most of the time, but under the pressure of the breeze, it would utter a "sh-sh-sh," like a schoolteacher supervising her pupils. Its strong fragrance blended with the perfume of honey and resin from the fir tree. Farther along a thoughtful maple gently moved its elaborately cut leaves, like paddles of a canoe. A stranger from the warm, sunny south, this tree appeared sad, as if it felt itself out of place in Siberia. The aspen extended its branches of dull leaves. Nearer the stream a weeping willow was visible. Its small flowers were still on the branches, but most of them had turned into funny silver buttons. Here was a poplar, also, with its millions of sticky, bright green leaves which shone like emeralds. A gracious and elegant birch delicately posed there, as if sure of its feminine charms and beauty. Bashfully, she waved her light-green and white hands, while near by stood a great oak, confident of its strength and power.

How beautiful the world seemed to me at that moment of waking in the woods! It was very quiet. Only the forest spoke its tales in soothing, peaceful rhythm. Suddenly I heard a bird close by. Through the branches I could see her sitting for a minute on a rock. Then she jumped to the ground and back to the rock, singing her joyful song. She was the first live thing I saw during those awful four days of rain. How cheerful she seemed, how carefree and gay. "It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter; life is all right," she seemed to say. Suddenly I was ashamed of my

weakness, and jumped to my feet in anger at my morbid thoughts of the night before.

As quickly as my heavy, bruised feet permitted, I walked to the edge of the hill. A little stream was raging below. I sat down on the grass and pushed myself down to the slippery slope of the river. When I reached the bank, I plunged into the icy water. With two sharp poles I moved slowly and carefully across the mountain stream. It took me twenty minutes, at least, to cover less than a hundred feet of water, so powerful was the current and so slippery the huge rocks on the river bed. Once across, I discovered a trail—a contraband trail, I was sure. It was well defined and could be seen without difficulty. I was so happy that I lay down on the grass and immediately went to sleep again.

The friendly sun warmed and invigorated my tired body, and when I woke up at sunset my clothing was entirely dry. It was a wonderful feeling to be in dry shirt and trousers again. Lifting my bag, I cheerfully began to climb the hill. On top of it I found a small hunter's cabin with some meagre supplies. But it was the matches that brought the most comfort to my tired heart. Words cannot express my happiness at sleeping that night in a dry, warm place, with some food in my stomach.

It never rained again during the rest of my trip across the Sayan. Although I feel a great temptation to tell of encountering tigers, alligators, wolves and other wild beasts, I shall have to disappoint my readers. I saw no animals. Only once I heard a terrible roar. I thought it must be a bear, at least, but when I looked from the high peak down the valley, I saw simply a wild elk. He scented me and disappeared into the forest. Another time I met two hunters. They were waiting for me in ambush, with their guns trained on the trail. Their surprise was great, when they saw just a dirty tramp with an

ordinary walking-stick in hand, advancing at a slow pace. But they were kind to me, gave me information in regard to the remainder of my trip, and fed me with dried venison. Another time I met four Buriat smugglers, who were very frightened at seeing me. They also gave me some food as soon as they discovered that I did not carry any weapons and was harmless.

Farther and farther I moved along the trail. Many times I lost it when the path crossed a swamp, river or bare rocks, but I always found it again after a few minutes' search. Then I reached a high altitude where snow and ice stayed unmelted until late in summer. The forests became less dense and gradually disappeared, giving place to small bushes of hardy northern plants. Some of them bore sweet red berries, which made a delicious meal.

On the tenth day I climbed still higher and walked on flat bare rocks. This was the famous Munko Sardyk, the highest peak of the Sayan, the home of mighty spirits, as superstitious natives believed. Many "abo" were erected there by Buriats and Mongols to soften the bad temper of the mountain gods. The abo is a high heap of stones or wood, decorated with strips of cloth, horsehair, rosaries and various utensils, such as cups and knives.

I knew that the sacred Lake Koso Gol was situated across this ridge on the Mongolian side. To the west lived an isolated Turkish tribe of Soyots. Their country is called Uriankhai. There the Bolsheviks could never enter, for the native sharpshooters always met them with deadly fire. At the time of Catherine the Great, Russia almost lost this virgin country because of a mistake made by the surveyors.

My thoughts were centred on Lake Koso Gol, the meeting place of all our officers who fled the Soviet. At the northern end of the lake was a small Russian settlement, Hanga, and at the southern end the

flourishing colony of Khathyl. There was *Liberty*, the meaning of which I had never before understood.

All day I travelled over the bare rocks. My stomach was empty and my feet were bothering me badly. Sometimes I had to lift them with my hands, especially when the trail became too steep or too dangerously narrow. Sometimes I went on all fours when I was not sure that I could do it in ordinary human fashion. The district through which I was passing was very high, and the rarefied atmosphere made me dizzy. The blood was pounding in my temples, and my breathing was rapid and painful. At times I had to lie down and rest, but a wild, strong impulse kept me on the move. I knew that I was winning my battle, slowly but surely. Each little advance on the trail seemed a new victory. A little open space, a huge stone, an abo, these were the new goals for each battle. I thought of nothing more than just this fight with the Sayan.

Hunger, my disabled feet, sharp rocks and bitter wind, and this awful high altitude, reduced me to a state where I was finally able only to crawl. Several times I lost consciousness, but by evening I finally reached the plateau of Munko Sardyk. I raised myself on my elbows and looked around. Like a table, the flat plateau spread itself to the very horizon. The evening fog almost concealed a huge abo made of a heap of tree trunks. How those Mongols were able to bring the wood over that trail was beyond my understanding.

It took me some time to reach the abo. I found a little sack of dry barley, left with the gods as a gift by some traveller. With great effort I cleared a space under the abo, crawled inside and fell asleep. All that night a furious storm raged on the plateau, but I was secure in my hideout.

The next morning I awoke considerably refreshed. I could even stand on my feet again. The warm sunshine filled everything with happiness, hope and gaiety. Even the bare rocks seemed to smile. Far ahead I

saw another abo, about fifteen miles away. It apparently marked the opposite end of the plateau. Whistling our regimental march, I commenced my daily journey, using as crutches two poles which I tore off the abo. I never stopped for rest, afraid that I would not be able to rise again to my feet. Bareheaded, barefooted, with torn clothing, I probably presented a pathetic and unsightly appearance.

I had to reach the next abo and see if there were more mountains to conquer, but I hoped that it was the end of the treacherous Sayan. At last I reached the end of the plateau. Like a mirage, a beautiful view opened before me. As far as eye could see a fertile green valley spread itself, and against the horizon stood a forest like an emerald wall. The valley was flooded with sunshine, and now I noticed a few dark dots slowly moving in different directions. Yes, they must be cattle, I thought, just ordinary cattle. But it was the first time in my life that the sight of cows in pasture had ever brought tears to my eyes.

3

Thus, I had crossed Usinsk, Oya, Tunkun, Kitoë and Byelaya ranges, culminating in the peak of Munko Sardyk, some twelve thousand feet high. Before me spread the smaller ridges of Yerghik-Taiga; farther on was the vast tableland of Mongolia. But I had still to cross a long, narrow stretch of land, about fifty miles in width, which belonged to Russia. The village of Sanga was the capital of this district.

My path skirted a forest and gradually descended into the valley. It was an exceedingly pleasant walk after the rocky Sayan. In the valley I again met with smugglers, who had with them ten pack horses. When they noticed me, they quickly galloped away. I was glad, because the cows were my goal at the moment.

And, indeed, they treated me with wonderful milk. I knew a Buriat settlement must be in the neighbourhood and the cows would take me there when they went home to their masters at sunset.

For a couple of hours I rested on the soft grass and then became impatient. "Perhaps the Buriats are at the end of this winding valley, and I might as well try to find them," was my thought, so I moved on again. But after several hours of futile searching, I gave up the attempt. These nomads always hide their yurts in groves and hills so that one might pass within a hundred feet of them without suspecting their presence. As they eat their only meal late in the evening, they do not keep a fire and there is no smoke to be seen from a distance.

The cattle, however, are their weak spot, for they can bring a stranger to them. Accordingly, the nomads select pastures in secluded valleys away from possible traffic.

We, I mean myself and the cows, came home at sunset. Dogs began barking in the distance, and then suddenly the primitive, temporary constructions of the Buriats became visible. Soon we approached the little settlement. The dogs dashed toward me in rage and certainly would have torn me to pieces if a very old man had not appeared on the scene. With short, aged steps he ran toward me.

"Oh, my son, my son," he exclaimed.

The old man noticed that I was on the verge of collapse; he put one of my arms across his shoulders and round his neck. With his other arm he held me tightly by the waist. He dragged me into his yurt and laid me carefully on the floor and gave me a drink of arik, a strong beverage prepared from milk. Soon his family arrived from the pastures with sheep and horses which, unlike cattle, can never be left alone. Apparently I represented to them a symbol of the old Russian glory when there had been peace and plenty.

Excitedly they discussed my case and finally decided to take me with them to Mongolia. For the time being, however, I should be their guest of honour.

I stayed with the Buriats a whole week. Plentiful food and peace of mind soon restored my strength. Only fifty more miles separated me from Mongolia. This last stretch of Russian soil was the most dangerous, however, as Red mountain police and numerous army patrols made the territory practically impassable. Although my new friends knew the mountain passes well, still they preferred to wait until some local mountaineer should be available.

At last a guide arrived who could lead them through the secret passes at night. I happened to be out when he came, and when I returned I saw the men sitting round the fire at their meal. It was dark already and bright stars crowded the sky. The old man introduced me to the newcomer. The latter looked at me attentively and then grabbed his gun.

"He is a Red. I saw him at Tora," he shouted.

I took to my heels. The Buriats seized their guns and soon bullets were buzzing past me. However, I reached the forest and began climbing the hill, too steep for the riders who were galloping after me. Eventually they lost me in the darkness, and I was again alone in a hostile world.

Fifty miles. Of course, it was impossible to cover that distance in a single night. Still, the farther I moved from the enraged Buriats the better. That same night I reached Sanga, though I really do not know how I did it. Probably the evil spirits just got tired of watching me. I also found the hospitality of a severe-looking Cossack, who lived as a hermit on the hill overlooking the village. He seemed to admire my courage in entering his hut, alone and defenceless, and facing him.

"There, below, the Red detachment is stationed," he said. "Look out for their patrols. Go straight south

and don't use any trails or roads. Thirty more miles and you'll be in Mongolia. Mention me at the small river bridge to the old fellow there. He's a Cossack too and will direct you further. Now, rest awhile. I'll wake you up at dawn."

At daybreak a Red platoon stopped at the Cossack's hut on their way from the village to the post on the road. While they were getting off their horses, the Cossack rushed into the hut and dumped the bedding over me, hiding me from sight completely. The Reds got a drink, asked my host whether he had seen any suspicious-looking people about recently, and then rode away.

I was almost suffocated under all the covers and was glad to emerge again into the fresh air. But it was dangerous to stay here any longer, so I set out towards the bridge. In an hour and a half I was there, and talked with the friendly Cossack, who also warned me to stay away from roads. He suggested that I should exchange my German uniform for Buriat clothing, which I willingly did. It was an impossibly dirty rag, which even a beggar would refuse to wear, and the danger of its falling apart gave me something to think about besides my fears and the persistent pleading of my empty stomach. However, I appreciated the value of the masquerade, and my spirits rose.

Alas! I was too confident. I had just emerged from the bushes and was going to run across the road in order to reach a river, which I had to swim. The woody hills on the opposite side would hide me again. All of a sudden I heard a mocking voice:

"Hello, brother. Where are you going at this hour?"

I looked back and saw four horsemen. All were well armed and wore Red uniforms. Taking me for a Buriat they were about to tease me some more, when one of them noticed that I was a white man. Immediately they jumped from their horses and fell on me.

"Let's shoot him now," said one. "What's the use of fooling around with this load on the road?"

"No," answered the chief, "we'd better take him to headquarters. It's only fifteen miles from here."

One of the four soldiers proved to be a first-aid man. As I could not rise to my feet, he inspected me and said:

"You fellows will have to take him on a horse. He'll never do the trip."

Scornfully one of the men lifted me on to his pony and we started. "The doctor" soon turned toward a small village, and another left to check some outposts. As for myself, I felt myself slipping from my position behind the rider, and finally rolled to the ground.

"Hell, we'll have to find a horse for the worm," said the soldier who had shared his horse with me.

"Listen," said the other, "I'll ride to the village and send you one."

We stopped by the roadside. Two Buriats, one a young chap of barely eighteen and the other an old man, appeared on the road. As soon as they saw us, they made an attempt to gallop away, but one of the Reds sent a shot after them and they stopped. They were assigned to help handle me. We rode a few more miles, when we noticed a drove of horses in the pasture across the river. The problem of a horse for me was apparently solved. The three young men swam their ponies to the other side of the river, while I stayed with the old Buriat.

We were now near a winter settlement of nomads. Each hut was surrounded by a high corral, and there were many dwellings spreading toward a steep, woody hill. I was sitting on the ground leaning against the fence and watching my companions across the river trying to catch a bronco. "As soon as they catch him, they will come back and deliver me to be questioned, tortured and shot. That will be the end of my story. Has it been worth while to struggle across the Sayan in order to be shot within sight of Mongolia? But

still . . . I am alive," I thought. "Some way out may open for me."

I recalled the case of a close friend, an officer of our artillery regiment. He was led by two Communists to the forest to be executed. Unexpectedly, he threw his legs wide apart and the two soldiers fell over them, their guns falling from their hands. He grabbed a rifle and stabbed both Reds with the bayonet. Then he opened fire on the small pursuit party and disappeared into the forest. His case was as desperate as mine, but he escaped.

I looked around. The old Buriat was watching the futile attempts of the men to catch a horse. Suddenly rage swept over me, and jumping to my feet I leaped over the fence, then another, a third, fourth, fifth, sixth, there was no end to the number of them. I heard the Buriats howling wildly, and several shots were fired after me. The riders plunged into the river and then galloped around the corrals toward the road that ran along the cliff. If they reached it before I did, I was lost. I ran madly, as if fleeing a forest fire. My lungs were burning dreadfully. I tore off my coat, lost my bag, hat, knife, everything. There . . . at the left the galloping riders entered the straight road. Now they could come at full speed toward me. Some hundred yards separated us now.

"Quick, quick, Dmitri! Quick!"

I was at the foot of the hill. I grabbed at the bushes and crawled up like a snake. Behind me I could hear the wild voices of my pursuers. They had stopped, while I was crawling higher and higher. My feet, my arms, my face were all bleeding badly and I could hardly see anything. My lungs . . . There was not enough air for them! God!

As I reached the top I wiped my face, wet with blood and perspiration, and looked downward. The four men were riding up the less steep side of the mountain in order to cut off my advance.

What to do? My brain worked quickly. Without hesitation, I rolled back and crawled into the deserted Buriat settlement. Here I found a hut with the door unlocked, entered it and stood motionless. Soon I heard the riders come back, swearing at the top of their voices. The arms of the old man were tied with a rope. Apparently he was to answer for my escape.

They were moving in my direction. I looked around the empty hut. There was positively no place to hide. Quickly I made a noose from my belt and tied it to the ceiling, deciding to hang myself rather than to surrender.

Minutes seemed like an eternity. Closer and closer came the Reds. I tightened the loop and bent my knees. Blood dashed to my head and black circles began to dance before my eyes. The Reds were in front of the hut now . . . but they did not stop. They passed at a trot. I was saved once again.

There was no time to lose. No doubt the Reds would send the mountain police after me. I must continue on my way immediately, and through this open valley in broad daylight.

From hut to hut I crawled on my belly through the tall grass. Above all, I was afraid that the awful sound of my heavy breathing would give me away. My lungs were making a noise like a concrete mixer. At last, here was the river . . . the blessed cool stream.

I plunged into it and for some ten minutes floated motionless as a log down the current. It carried me to a small peninsula. Here I hid myself in the bushes and crawled towards the hills, as furtive as a rat.

In the hills I met a tributary of the river. It flowed north from Mongolia. I decided to follow it, walking upstream in the water. By five in the afternoon, I was sure that my pursuers had lost my trail. Presently, I saw a little smoke emerging through the vegetation to my left, and discovered another Buriat winter settlement. It occurred to me that maybe some of the

Buriats had returned for forgotten tools or supplies. Perhaps I wanted to believe in this remote possibility, as I was terribly tired and hungry. At any rate, I decided to try my luck and investigate.

These few huts with their encircling corrals stood on a slight elevation overlooking the valley. Gradually and with great caution I approached the first building, outside which the smoke was rising. Carefully I looked from behind the hut and saw several Red patrolmen sitting at their supper before the open fire.

There was no doubt that the Reds would shoot as soon as they saw me. I was afraid to walk back; the thought of awaiting that shot unnerved me. So I fell on my back, and began a slow retreat, inching myself along on my elbows. Fortunately, the guards were busy with their hot meal and I reached the bushes safely.

I thought there must be another Red around somewhere. I must not let him see me or the whole crowd would be after me in no time. Of course, they knew the surroundings better than I and could easily catch me. Carefully I advanced and suddenly found the soldier. He was sitting by the creek washing his feet. As any slight noise would have betrayed me, I did not move. But I could not stay there indefinitely. My wild instincts solved the problem. I gathered all my strength and jumped at the man from behind. I grabbed him by his hair and submerged his head in the water, holding it there until his struggles ceased and he slipped from my grasp, dead. I ran, limping painfully on my right foot.

After a mile or two I entered a smelly, rusty swamp. The deep-red sunset dyed the waters, and I seemed to walk in hot, human blood. Farther and farther I advanced, many times stumbling into deep holes. How many hours I struggled on, I do not know. I barely noticed that night had arrived. The moon shed a greenish light through the vapour of the swamp.

When I could go no farther I curled up on a bare stone projecting into the water and immediately fell asleep.

Later I was awakened by the bitter cold. The mist of the swamp had gathered here and there in ghostly figures, which silently swayed in the breeze. The lower portion of the fog reflected the ominous red of the smelly water, and the upper was white or grey, depending on the thickness of the vapour. With each little motion of the air, numerous ripples ran in zigzags over the surface, like snakes, disappearing at the other end of the swamp. The solid mass of forest stood in the background. It looked like some huge prehistoric mammal moving the bristles on its back in rhythm with its breathing.

The owl howled its dull, ill-omened "hoo-hoo." There was a peculiar static silence over the whole valley: the silence of death. I was afraid to move. It seemed that even the slightest noise would betray me and the malevolent Unknown would extend its cold, clammy hands and smother me.

Gradually realization of my plight dawned on me. The thought of the danger of the trip ahead struck me like a whip. I jerked my body so that my dead feet would fall into the water, and gathered strength enough to massage my feet. When they became alive again, I crossed myself and moved to cover the second half of the swamp.

In a couple of hours I reached dry surface and was able to advance faster. At dawn, when all objects became more visible, I found myself near the forest, on the edge of a little valley. A deep creek cut the valley in half. Thick bushes grew along the stream, and farther on magnificent fir trees were gathered in a splendid grove. Heaps of fresh-cut hay were lying in disorderly formation, and in the midst of them a small white hut stood as a guardian. It was made of birch bark, and was the size of those erected

for the storage of tools. Primitive as it was, it was a welcome sight. No doubt the harvest was finished, and there would be nobody inside. However, some food might have been left in the hut. Cautiously I approached it and opened the door. It was empty.

There was a big barrel in the corner. Some time ago it had been filled with milk and left there to ferment. Later the milk would be used for cheese and biscuits. Now it was covered with green, rose and black mould. I cleaned that off and ate several handfuls of the sour substance. There was also a bare wooden bed. The temptation was too great, and I lay down just to feel a dry place. Immediately I fell asleep.

Perhaps it was six o'clock in the evening when I was awakened by two riders galloping by the hut. Before I could rise to my feet, they stopped at the door. As there were no windows, I could not see who it was. My first impulse was to hide in the fermenting milk, but then it would overflow on the floor and I would suffocate. The bed was too low to crawl under. I grabbed a sharp stick and prepared to defend myself. Then the door opened and I saw two children, a boy and a girl about ten years of age. Petrified with terror, they slammed the door back and ran wildly toward the creek. In no time they disappeared from sight.

There was nothing for me to do but to follow them. I hobbled toward the creek. As soon as I crossed it, I saw several Buriats running in my direction with their rifles in hand. Then they saw me and lifted their guns to take aim. I stood motionless, awaiting the end. What else could I do?

But the Buriats changed their minds, lowered their rifles and surrounded me. I told them how the children were frightened, and pointed out that they had left two good horses, with which I could easily have escaped. In the beginning the nomads were

doubtful, but then they began to smile, convinced that I was harmless. Two husky young fellows went after the horses, while we moved toward the camp. During our walk, I learned that Mongolia was within two miles, and that the Buriats had just escaped from Russia themselves. They offered to take me with them the next day.

Soon we reached the camp, securely hidden in the forest. We had a wonderful supper before the warm fire, and I went to sleep in contentment and peace. I was out of reach of the Communists.

PART IV

THE LAND OF THE MONGOLS

I

THE morning was beautiful. The rising sun clothed every object in colour. Nature seemed to smile happily at its awakening. The tall fir trees nodded their magnificent heads, as if greeting the coming day. The perfumes of honey and resin, fresh-cut hay and numerous flowers—all blended together. Peace and contentment ruled.

The cattle were still resting on the ground when the children began to build the morning fire. The women engaged themselves in making tea, while the men continued to sleep. Their cattle gave plenty of milk, cheese and butter. Meat was abundant, and hides could easily be exchanged for clothing. So what else was there to do but sleep? These nomads lived a life of happy retirement.

For breakfast we had thick tea with salt, fat and flour, some toasted wheat, and sausages. Songs were our morning prayers, and they also served to gather the cattle together for the march to Mongolia.

It took considerable time to line up the sheep, cows and horses, but by persistent persuasion, whipping, and many noisy cries and shouts, the caravan at last began to move, and we entered the forest.

We were so busy herding the livestock, I did not notice when the forest came to an end. Suddenly, a large green valley opened before us. Softly rolling hills were in the background and a few yurts surrounded by cattle. These huts were made of grey felt and were of a different shape from those of the Buriats.

I turned to my friends in surprise. Solemnly they descended from their ponies, knelt, and began their prayers: "Oh, Jewel in the Lotus, Master of all Living, Deliverer of Men, Father, we kneel here in solemn gratitude."

We had reached Mongolia. It was the hour of the Hare (6-8 a.m.), in the month of Sudle Tzar (last month), of the Zung season (summer).

My friends, the Buriats, set up a camp, awaiting instructions from the Mongolian government. Their large stock of cattle needed pastures, which it was hard for the Mongols to provide immediately for all the refugees from Russia. The Buriats, as direct descendants of the Genghis Khan warriors, were considered brothers and were well cared for.

I might have joined these friendly people in their new venture, but I felt that I would not fit into the picture. They invited me to stay as a teacher for their children; however, I had other plans. It had been agreed in Irkutsk that all officers of our regiment would meet at Khathyl, a little settlement at the southern end of the lake. It was situated about eighty or ninety miles west. Later, when I reached Khathyl, I found none of them; what became of those fifteen men, I do not know.

My immediate problem was to get official admission to the country. With this in mind, I decided to visit a local noyon, or Mongolian prince, in charge of the district. His yurt, built of wood and in Buriat fashion, could be seen in the distance. It was large and bore the imposing insignia of a nobleman. I bade good-bye to my friends and set out for the noyon.

I descended the open valley openly. It was the first time for months that I did not have to be afraid of anybody and could move along without hiding. The feeling of liberty was intoxicating and, had it not been for my poor physical condition, I certainly would have sung and danced for joy. But, as things were,

I could only smile happily. In high spirits I arrived at the yurt.

They were expecting me. Those semi-civilized people certainly have a telegraph of their own. Afterwards, when I continued on my way, I noticed that even lonely settlers would say to me that they had been expecting me for two or three days. Who carried these messages was a mystery.

Two soldiers stood by the door, their horses tied close by. They looked at me without any sign of curiosity, but knocked at the door as if it were ordinary routine for them to welcome a dirty, unkempt stranger. A Buriat, who served as interpreter for the prince, appeared and looked me over critically. Then he motioned me through the door. The first thing that attracted my attention in the big, round yurt was a massive image of Buddha sitting on a gilded lotus flower opposite the door. Eight gold oil lamps were burning before him, and there was a variety of food offerings in bright Chinese cups. It was very quiet, and I thought for a moment that I and the Buriat were alone. However, as soon as my eyes became accustomed to the semi-darkness, I noticed the prince sitting at my left on a high bed. He looked at me with steady, half-closed eyes, as if entirely detached and uninterested.

In accordance with Mongolian etiquette, I knelt. Then I took out a hathyk, or ceremonial scarf of cheap light blue silk, which the Buriats had given me, placed it over both arms, and offered it to the noyon. I should have taken my knife and hung it loosely on the string by which it is attached to the belt, but I did not have a knife. Neither had I a pipe to light and offer to the noyon. He patiently waited until I completed the ceremony, and I waited no less patiently for him to speak.

I thought he was asleep, he sat so still, detached and motionless. The Buriat sat stiff also, with downcast eyes. Finally the noyon uttered a sentence :

"Go back to your own country."

Again a dead silence reigned over the yurt. I did not know what to reply. I had risked my life to accomplish that trip; I had reached a state of complete physical and nervous exhaustion, and now . . . I had to go back.

"No, I will not go back," I answered at last in a harsh voice, which I did not recognize as my own. "You might as well shoot me right now."

A semblance of interest passed over the indifferent face of the Mongol. Slowly he uttered a few words to the Buriat and then asked me:

"Why did you come and why do you want to stay in Mongolia?"

I did my best to explain the situation to that simple fellow. Yes, he had heard of the Russian revolution, and he thought the Russians were well punished by Providence for killing their "white khan." I related the story of my crossing the Sayan infested with powerful spirits. He asked me several questions in regard to the road and, satisfied that the story was genuine, he said:

"You must be a good man, stranger, since the gods guarded you through that perilous trip. You may rest at my place and then go wherever you please."

He motioned to a woman, who served me with a cup of tea and some roasted grain and cheese. Meanwhile, we continued our conversation about Russia. Several years before the time "when all white men went insane and began killing each other," the noyon had visited Irkutsk. He was deeply impressed by the railroads, steamships, large buildings, in all of which there were separate springs of water running through iron pipes, some hot and some cold. Ferocious monsters on rubber wheels ran loose and one could hear from a distance their heavy breathing and scent their annoying smell. Yes, he knew Russia well.

In the course of our talk, the noyon asked me about

my plans for the future, and was much surprised to hear that I was not going to stay, but would leave immediately for Khathyl, and thence across the Gobi Desert to China.

"Why China?" asked the noyon.

"Because it is my home," I answered.

After some silence, he reflected:

"You white people certainly have peculiar ways. A Russian flees from Russia through Mongolia to his home in China. Hmmm."

Thanking the noyon for his kindness, I finally bade him farewell. He said his "Kale-pe-a" and raised his hand. The Buriat opened the door and I was free to go where I pleased in the beautiful emerald valley.

Blinded by the bright sunshine, I moved on hesitantly. I did not know where to go or what to do in this immense valley. Liberty was so sudden that I felt lost. A convict who leaves the prison and faces the city again must feel as I did at that moment. I crossed myself in prayer and began my new travel as a free man in a free country.

The grass was high and soft, and everywhere were beautiful flowers. Bright orange, purple, white and blue, they grew in cheerful abundance and their delicate perfume was wafted on the light breeze. Far beyond, low hills rose like transparent bluish clouds nestling close to the ground. White, black and brown dots moving in the distance indicated groups of cattle in pasture.

I turned westward. Eighty miles more and I would be with my friends again.

My chief impression of Mongolia during those first few days was the absence of human habitations. Needing pasture land for their cattle, the nomads naturally lived far apart. There are few real roads in Mongolia, the rest being just trails badly washed by rains and covered with grass. Ordinarily one would feel lonesome under the circumstances, but the vigour and beauty of the landscape soon banish any despondency.

With jealous eyes I watched coyotes trail the antelopes, and eagles hunting the abundant game. Once I caught a draffa, a wild Mongolian turkey. They weigh about forty pounds and have a hard time getting off the ground. I also caught plenty of fish with my bare hands in the shallow waters. Broiled over a fire, the fish made a delicious meal, or at least I thought it was delicious. The Mongols do not fish or hunt. If they kill wild animals, it is only for the furs, which they trade to the Chinese for calico, tea, tobacco, and salt. Hunting is considered a sorry profession, similar to our gravedigging.

Several times a lonely Mongol rider would gain on me and stop. He would be satisfied with my simple explanation: "Tsagan Urus, Khathyl yabana . . . I am a White Russian, going to Khathyl." We would have a smoke, the Mongol would express his best wishes and with a broad, sincere smile gallop away. For some time I would hear him singing. Those songs had charming melodies, and the voices were as strong and clear as silver flutes. The musical sound would become less and less distinct and then die among the hills, and I would be alone again.

By the end of the third day I reached the vicinity of the Koso Gol. This volcanic lake, about ninety miles by twelve, is still subject to sudden earthquakes, and then high waves wash far ashore. There is a beautiful island in the middle, but nobody lives on it, as the lake is feared by the superstitious natives. Hanga Kure, a Buddhist monastery, is situated at the northern end; Khathyl, the Russian settlement, is at the southern end, and to the west is located a wonderful and rich monastery, Darkhat Kure.

Night comes quickly in Mongolia. Therefore, at sunset the traveller should prepare himself for the night. It was getting late, and I still had about five miles to go in order to reach my destination. To my left I saw a nice big rock protruding from the hillside.

A forest was close by. Here I could easily procure firewood. The place was an ideal one and I camped right there. After eating, I watched the fire gradually die out. The night was warm and a myriad bright stars crowded the darkening sky. From a distance, the mountain echoes carried to me a nomad's call to his horses. I rolled over on the ground close to the warm ashes and prepared to sleep my last night in forced solitude.

Suddenly I heard horses in the valley. I rose on my elbows and looked down the hill. Two riders were coming in my direction. Several times in the past, Mongols had visited me at night, attracted by the fire. We would have a smoke and then they would leave in peace. However, I was very much surprised to hear these two riders speak Russian.

"That must be he," said one.

"Yes. Get the rope ready," answered the other.

I jumped to my feet and ran, but they caught me easily, bound my arms tightly and fastened me over one of their pack horses like a sack of potatoes. Then we moved down the valley and toward Koso Gol.

I would not ask any questions, or reveal my identity, before I learned with what kind of people I was going to deal. They might be Communists, they might be Whites, and again they might be ordinary bandits. I expected to learn something from their conversation, but they were evidently so angry that they didn't even speak to each other, but simply smoked their big wooden pipes in silence.

In an hour we arrived at Khathyl, where my escort threw me into a dark cellar for the night, slammed the door and left me to the rats.

Among the many emotions aroused in me by the incident, curiosity was predominant. Who were those men, and why on earth had they arrested me so unceremoniously? The Reds did not keep any troops in Mongolia, I was sure. However, they could station secret agents there. That would be bad.

I heard the men walking back and forth above me ; supper was apparently being served, and people began drinking and singing in loud voices. I recognized the Cossack songs immediately, for they have a peculiar rhythm to suit the horses' steps. A Cossack and his horse are two in one, and the songs must please both. My interest increased when they sang old Imperial tunes. There was no doubt any longer that the men were Whites, or at least opposed to the Communists. I could not understand why I had been arrested. If only I could call their attention to myself, but my arms were still bound tight, and my voice was too weak to raise above the noise of the drunken men above. I was very tired, so I rolled over on the damp floor and fell asleep. Morning came, and I was prepared for more adventure. However, the developments were too swift, and it was not for me to direct them.

The same two men dragged me out into the sunshine and fresh air. A crowd of about fifty Cossacks surrounded us, cheering. From the cries, shouts and swearing I gathered that they took me for a Communist spy, for nobody would believe that a man could cross the Sayan without a guide, horse and rifle. The crowd became more and more menacing. They dragged me to a tall pine tree, threw a noose around my neck. I still remember that one of the fellows dampened the rope in water so that the noose would slip better. Apparently I was to be lynched.

My feeble attempts to explain their error merely aroused more indignation and anger on their part. Everything was soon ready and a dead silence descended over the crowd. Eagerly they watched my last minutes, and I resolved to lessen their pleasure by dying stoically. I noticed some people running toward us. They were late-comers and were afraid of missing the show. Meanwhile the rope was tightening about my neck. I closed my eyes and waited for the end, peculiarly indifferent, as if the whole thing

did not concern me. Presently I felt my body become terribly heavy and the knot pressed painfully at the back of my neck. The fellows began to pull me into the air. I was choking, gasping for breath. The next moment I heard a shot, the rope broke and I fell to the ground unconscious. Later I learned that a former university friend of mine was among the new-comers. Upon graduation, he had accepted a consular post in Mongolia, and I had lost sight of him. Now he recognized me and saved my life with a masterful shot.

The Cossacks poured several buckets of water over me and brought me back to life. After that we went to celebrate the event by getting drunk and singing and dancing until we fell into an exhausted sleep.

2

During the World War, the Russian Imperial government sent Dr. Guy, an authority on cattle, into Mongolia to organize and supervise the shipment of beef and mutton to the army. With generous financial support he soon established a large packing business at Khathyl, close both to Russia and the centre of Mongolian ranching.

After the revolution, Dr. Guy continued to supply the army with meat until Kolchak's force was defeated, after which he helped Russian refugees by feeding and clothing them with the remainder of his cattle and money. Gradually a small troop of Cossacks assembled at his headquarters, enjoying his generous hospitality. This was the situation when I arrived at Khathyl, though there were no officers from my regiment among the group.

I found the Cossacks honest patriots who still believed that Russia would recover and that they would return home. At times, when they became impatient, they would move across the border, give

battle to the Reds and then retreat again into Mongolia. They thought that some day the Russian people would join them and they would lead "the people's army" to victory.

I did not share their optimism ; neither did I believe in living on charity. Therefore, I saw Dr. Guy and asked him to get me some occupation among his Mongolian friends. By the time I had obtained enough money to buy a horse, probably the officers of our regiment would arrive and we could move to China. Dr. Guy understood my motives. However, he advised me to accept one of his many horses and move alone south to China. Upon my refusal, he said :

"All right, young man. Here is a letter to a lama at Darkhat Kure. You will be welcome back here if you are disappointed at the monastery."

Thus I was on the go again. I did not know then that I was wasting valuable time waiting for my friends, who were never to come. The opportune moment lost, I was caught in a whirlwind of events which kept me in Mongolia for a year and a half.

A long, narrow valley led to Darkhat Kure. Almost at the end of the valley there was a steep rise that stretched four or five miles farther before it turned sharply to the south. It was at this turning point of the road that the monastery was situated. High mountains rose immediately in the rear of the white structures, and completed the beautiful scenery. I remember Darkhat Kure well, because there I learned much of the spiritual background of Mongolia, and there we fought our last and most desperate battle with the Communists before we retreated into Tibet.

Thi Srong Detsan, to whom I had a note, was one of the "red-gown" lamas, who are generally considered very learned and proficient in medical and occult sciences. However, they were thought inferior

to the "yellow gown" lamas of Tibet, so far as the civil administration of shrines, temples and monasteries was concerned. In Mongolia the yellow lamas were most esteemed; in Tibet the red lamas were the most feared and, accordingly, the most worshipped.

Thi Srong Detsan was a middleman, through whom the yellow lamas received certain of their supplies from the outside, and he had a flourishing business in hay and firewood and other bulky materials.

I reached the place by evening. A well-travelled road rolled along the foot of the hill and into a little settlement where the inevitable Chinese shops were located. Close by were the incredibly dirty yurts of the parasitical element, that is, the professional beggars, Mongolian failures and misfits. My lama, whom I shall call Detsan for the sake of simplicity, lived on the slope of a hill opposite the monastery. He possessed two large, light-grey yurts. Some cattle were in his corral, a few horses were under saddle, and several dozen oxen of enormous size were lying on the ground by their primitive two-wheeled wagons. Two huge black dogs were securely tied by a rope to the wreckage of a Russian droshky.

When those ferocious-looking dogs saw me coming, they began dancing, pulling and tearing at their ropes in an attempt to get at me. A stout Mongol appeared at the door of one of the yurts. He looked me over and then calmed his faithful guardians. I presented the note, he read it and led me into his yurt. We exchanged the usual ceremonial smoke and drank our tea in silence. Then the lama began his inquiries about Dr. Guy, his health and his cattle. Women are of so little significance in Mongolia that Detsan did not trouble to inquire about Dr. Guy's charming wife.

He liked my Buriat name, "Altin Shoot," which we decided to retain. I was to help Detsan with the harvest, for which I would receive a horse and a saddle at the expiration of two and a half months.

Presently I stretched my swollen legs and involuntarily groaned at the terrific pain.

"You are a sick man!" exclaimed the lama. "Let me see what is the matter." He bent over and inspected my legs. Then he filled his pipe, lighted it and puffed several times, and looking straight into my eyes he said significantly:

"They look bad, very bad, Altin Shoot. But tell me the story and I'll see what I can do for you."

I explained that my condition was the result of too strenuous walking. He thought awhile, then opened the drawer under the image of Buddha and dragged out some plant root. He crushed it and mixed it with dried elk's horn. After boiling this substance, he gave me some to drink and poured the rest into a container for future use. After binding my feet in leaves, he ordered me to go to sleep. He told me that, in return for his medical attention, I would have to repair his Russian droshky, and I gladly agreed.

I woke up late in the evening very much refreshed and with less pain in my legs. Detsan was out taking care of his wagons. I heard his hammer industriously pounding at the many wooden joints of the vehicle. His wife, an attractive young woman, was preparing supper, after which she and her daughter went to milk the cows. I remained alone and took the opportunity to study the yurt and its contents.

The hut was made of thick felt, securely attached to thin, wooden cross sections, which could be folded at will. As a matter of fact, the Mongol can take his house apart, pack it on the wagons and move on to new pastures in about half an hour. I saw it done, as I happened to live one time near a "sinner," who had been ordered by the monastery to move every day for a whole year as a penalty. To fold and unfold the yurt became a morning exercise for that poor fellow, and it was amusing to watch him move his hut just ten feet from the place he had slept the night before.

The Mongolian yurt is semi-conical in shape, so as to offer no resistance to the strong wind. The low wooden door, painted red, always faces south. When the Mongol opens it in the morning, the sun heats the dwelling quickly. In the centre of the roof there is a wide opening which serves two purposes, chimney and window. After the evening meal, this hole is securely closed with felt. The yurt then is immediately filled with the warmth of the still-hot fireplace. How the Mongols can survive the atmosphere is beyond my understanding, for the fumes from the hot charcoal so fill the place that everybody has to lie on the floor. My solution was found in secretly lifting the felt at the floor near my "bed."

Although, of course, the size of the yurt varies in accordance with the wealth of the inhabitant, it is usually about ten feet in diameter. The yurts of Mongolian nobility can easily give lodging to a hundred people.

Two feet in the centre are taken up by an open fireplace. The right side is the women's domain, and the left is allotted to the men. The place in front of the Holy Buddha, whose image always faces the entrance, is for guests. The most esteemed guest has the company of one of the host's daughters. Girls, when they reach maturity, are allowed to have their own private yurts, where they earn money for their future households by the sale of their love to transients.

Near the door, where saddles, harnesses, bags and tools are kept, the newborn lambs and calves are taken care of. There are no beds or bedding. People sleep on the same felt, as the hut is made of, resting their heads on whatever is handy. It might be a saddle, a sack of grain, a bundle of clothing, or someone's foot. They undress completely for the night and cover themselves with their clothing. Any girl is very proud if some man will crawl over to her in the darkness.

Mongolian life is simple. Early in the dawn, when

everything is silent and the forest is still wrapped in blue fog, the Mongolian wife rises, and with her coat hanging loosely over her naked body, starts a fire. She is sleepy and moves lazily. As soon as the fire catches the dry wood, she goes to sleep again.

The yurt is soon filled with the warmth of the cheerfully crackling fire. Men begin to smoke their long Chinese pipes, lying beneath the fur coats, while the mistress, now dressed, prepares the "breakfast." In the cast-iron bowl, in which supper was prepared the night before, she boils some water, adds a little salt, a lump of hard brick tea, a handful of flour, butter and plenty of milk. This thick mixture they call "tea."

When the tea is ready the mistress pours it into tall, metallic jugs, called *damba*. These are placed close to the fire to keep them hot during the day. She serves notice to her sleepy family that breakfast is ready. What I thought of it in the beginning, I will not say, but as the tea is the only nourishment taken during the day, I got used to it and by this time had even learned to like it. Roasted grain and dry cheese soaked in tea are eaten also. I never got used to the cheese and I always felt sick for several days after eating it.

After half a dozen cups of the tea-soup, the Mongol dresses himself in a long robe of dark blue or cherry red. He puts his knife in the belt at his back, pushes his pipe into his roomy boots and packs his wooden teacup in his bosom, for the rule in Mongolia is, "Those eat and drink who have their own utensils." The Mongol has a hat that is beyond description. It cannot be compared with anything in the world, and only the Korean hat exceeds it in absurdity. It does not and is not supposed to cover anything. By a string under the chin, the hat is held miraculously hanging over one ear.

The Mongol is ugly and clumsy on his feet, but handsome and smart on a horse. He rides only young, half-wild horses. As soon as a horse becomes tamed,

he discards it and gets a new one from his drove. Usually he rides about a hundred miles a day visiting friends in the neighbourhood, lonely nomads like himself. Nothing but a gallop suits him. He hates a trot. The horse need not be guided by bridle: it feels the rider. Several times I have observed a horse carry its drunken master. As soon as the gay fellow sways, almost falling out of the saddle, the horse swings sideways too and catches the master. The horse swings in all directions, as if dead drunk itself. It lets the man fall just by the door of his yurt. Truly, that is not an exaggeration.

In the morning, the Mongol sits outside his yurt smoking until the sun heats the air. Then he opens his corral and drives the cattle to pasture. He leaves his herds unguarded all day and the cows and sheep return by themselves in the evening. A few horses may be missing, but they will gallop home as soon as they hear their master's call or a shot from his gun. He counts the cattle, herds them into corrals, and enters the yurt. A plentiful supper of meat is consumed; he smokes his last pipe and goes to sleep. It is silent in the yurt; only the oil-lamp of the altar lights the solemn face of Buddha, the reincarnation of divine intelligence.

Every day is the same, and it has been thus for a thousand years.

Detsan finished his day's labour and returned, accompanied by a younger man. This was his son Tsan Gambo. I liked Gambo at first sight. Like his father, he was a big, stout man with tremendous shoulders and a thick sunburned neck. One of his shoulders was naked and I could see his magnificent chest. But it was his smile that won my friendship so easily: kind, hospitable and tactful. Gambo was my friend to start with, and he remained so until I left them later in the year.

When we started our work in the fields, I enjoyed their company greatly. Naked to the waist, we moved together with scythes in hand, Detsan first, Gambo second, and I last in the row. Three swathes of fresh-cut grass and flowers followed in our wake. The air was clear, the food plentiful, and the exercise excellent. What else could a young man desire ?

How different they were from myself. The fundamental difference consisted in their belief that man is a soul with a body, while we believe that man is a body with a soul. Generally speaking, our ideas and ideals are playthings, merely a mental gymnastic. For most of us it does not matter whether we are Christians or not, whether we are Republicans or Democrats—our lives go on just the same. We may preach many things, but act quite contrary to our expressed ideals. Being worldly, our civilization is necessarily a revolutionary one, demanding changes to suit the changing times. We are more and more aware of the fact that our religion is built upon superstitions, and therefore we detach ourselves further and further from it, leaving our churches empty.

It is different with the Mongols, whose lives are inseparable from their religion. Their government is theocratic, and therefore stationary. They live a leisurely life in complete repose and happiness. Detsan told me once that the true Buddhist will find God within himself and therefore does not need to be guided in his services to the Almighty by priests. His thorough knowledge of Buddhist philosophy, upon which the Buddhist religion is founded, created him many enemies among the clergy, and he was forced to leave the "yellow" ranks in the monastery. He tried to explain the teachings, and I cannot find a better term to characterize them than "cosmic consciousness." Once he expressed it in this simple way : We are inseparable particles of the world, just as the world we live in is inseparable from the universe. As

the universe never dies, we do not die either, but are simply transformed into other forms of the universe. "It does not matter whom and how you worship," said Detsan, "for there is only one Unchanging, Permanent, and Eternal, of which you, yourself, are a part."

The time passed quickly. We remained in the fields until the season was over, living in a small hut built of hay over a wooden skeleton. From a distance the hut resembled just a heap of hay, and although it was full of grasshoppers, we at least felt secure from the wolves. Almost every night we heard them howling their sad, threatening chorus in the distance. The last two weeks we worked hard at the haystacks. The hay was stacked around a central pole, and when the rick was finished we fastened several additional poles at the top, to prevent the hay from being torn out by the wind. The Mongols have no barns for storage and they bring the hay home when needed. They use it only as emergency rations for newborn animals. The rest of the cattle continue to feed in pasture. In winter when the snow covers the valleys, the Mongols move up the mountains, where the layer of snow is not deep. Here the cattle dig the dry grass from under the white carpet with their hoofs. The food is meagre and many cattle die of starvation. Some Mongols eat the animals that die in this manner, but those of better station kill their winter supply late in the autumn, when the cattle are fat and in good condition. The meat is stored in small log cabins in secluded canyons, the cold keeping it fresh through the season. Here they also store their dairy products and a small supply of maize. They do not eat bread and use the grain only as an addition to their tea.

At last we finished the harvest. We mounted our horses and rode back home. I found that Detsan's daughter had cleaned and polished an old bridle and saddle. A new blue cushion was substituted for the

old one, and the brass stirrups shone once more. After tea and a little rest we galloped some ten miles up into the hills to Detsan's horse pasture. He gave me a Mongolian lasso and offered to let me catch any horse I liked. The lasso, or *urga*, was hard to use. On one end of a twenty-foot pole there was a loop and I had to get the horse's head into that loop and then hold it firmly until the horse began to choke in attempting to escape.

After I caught the animal, he easily jerked me out of the saddle and pulled me along the ground. But soon the loop began to work, and the horse lost his breath and stopped. It was even harder now to put a bridle over his head; he pulled and pushed, snarled and bit, and tried to stamp me with his front legs. Finally it was done. I grabbed the horse by the ears and pulled his head down while Detsan saddled him. This was done with less effort than I expected. As soon as I jumped into the saddle, the horse leaped forward and dashed in a mad gallop down the valley. I succeeded in directing him up a hill, and he soon became tired and surrendered to my will. That day I returned home scratched and tired, but proud and happy: I had my own horse.

My racer was dark red with a thick black mane and tail, white star on his forehead and a spot of white on one hind leg. He was a Mongolian beauty: shiny, healthy and fresh. I named him Genghis Khan.

At home elaborate preparations for the autumn celebration at the monastery were awaiting our immediate attention.

The holiday *Obo Takhilna* was in commemoration of local Mighty Spirits. A tall *abo* was built in our valley in front of the monastery. This monument was elaborately decorated with pieces of cloth and bright ribbons. In front of it a clear space was left for religious performances and athletic contests. Farther on, huge tents were erected for the nobility and wealthy

persons. Behind the tents, food and refreshment were prepared for the chosen few sitting in the tents. In every yurt, including ours, the best clothing was taken out of trunks; buttons polished; expensive caps, knives and pipes and ladies' jewellery were liberated from their silk covers. Ceremonial scarves were hung from the ceiling to obtain the proper shape. Holy images made of butter and evil images made of flour were carefully prepared. Chinese candy and pastry invaded our house, and in addition to the local drink of arik, strong as brandy, a more delicate drink of Chinese hanchi was added. But the most important thing proved to be matches. Those who could display them were equal to Rockefeller in the esteem of their neighbours. Usually Mongols use a flint and a piece of dry moss to light their fires. The matches, therefore, immediately elevated their owners to an exalted rank. However, only one or two matches would be lighted during the whole jubilee, which lasted three days. Then the matches would be carefully wrapped in silk and put away until the next year. Detsan's family was particularly proud of the possession of an ordinary Russian kitchen knife. It was wrapped in several layers of silk.

At the appointed time we rode to the field, dismounted and ceremoniously took our places under tents. Immediately a damba of hot tea was placed before us. We drank the tea slowly and waited. Nomads on magnificent horses and dressed in barbaric splendour were arriving all the time. Probably ten thousand people were there. At last we saw a procession of monks emerging from the tall red monastery door. It began with yellow lamas, who were dressed in canary coloured robes and did not wear any head-dress. The red lamas followed. To my great surprise, all of them wore something like ancient Roman helmets with long hair-brushes running over the tops and backs. The red lamas also carried many kinds of

heavy sacred images, bright banners and something like propaganda posters bearing holy inscriptions. As few could read them, the inscriptions must have been very impressive to the superstitious crowd. Among the monks I noticed about two dozen men dressed in costumes and masks. They were prepared for the famous devil dance.

The procession stopped by the abo, and the ritual began. The loud prayers mingled with the roaring of huge drums and the deafening rattle of brass cymbals. There were horns fifteen feet long, each one of which rested on the shoulders of two stalwart men, and a crowd of zealous young monks stood in line before them. Each blew the horn as long and as hard as he could and then gave his place to the next in line.

Another less annoying musical instrument participated in the general cacophony. It was a large seashell, thick, shiny and of a delicate colour. Through its spiral hole the man was uttering a shrill, sharp note that sent a chill along my spine. To complete this inadequate description, I will confess that I did not know what it was all about, and I still do not know.

The situation improved considerably when the Mongols finished the religious part of the jubilee and began the civil portion, consisting of various athletic contests. Wrestling was one of the important events. All these boys were strong as bulls, and it was a great pleasure to watch them in their evenly contested struggles.

The races were next, a joyful and exciting affair. The excellent riders on wild horses will always remain in my memory. The races lasted several hours, as many wanted to participate and all were eager to watch. A beautiful golden horse with white mane and tail was the winner.

It was long after midday before the contests ended and all went to indulge in the feast. In gay, laughing and shouting groups they spread in a colourful moving pattern across the valley. We went to the monastery,

with its gates wide open to the pilgrims. The architecture of the shrines and temples was a mixture of Chinese and Tibetan. The temples were of black and red, and the shrines were white and gold. The praying wheels were brown. The inner yards were paved in large blocks of grey granite. Many little brass bells were attached to the roof and they made a harmonious noise in the light breeze.

Before we entered the temple we went through rows of prayer wheels, on which holy inscriptions were written. By turning them on their axles we exposed the prayers to the Mighty Spirits, who were at liberty to read them. Many pilgrims prostrated themselves on the ground in solemn devotion.

It was dark inside the temple, and cool as a catacomb. I saw a row of lamas, and in front of them big drums and cymbals. Small boys struck the drums and the lamas themselves played the cymbals. Five priests sat on high cushions on each side of the aisle which led to the altar. There a huge statue of Buddha rested on a magnificent golden seat of lotus. Many rows of gilded figures extended to the left and right of Buddha. These were the bodies of the dead abbots of the monastery, embalmed and dried. Above them one thousand small statues of Buddha were placed on narrow red shelves. Eight large gold lanterns shed their uneven yellow light over a limited area, the rest of the temple being dark. Fantastic shadows played on the walls and ceiling.

We sat on the floor at the entrance, and I watched Detsan closing his eyes and bending his head low. He said nothing, but just sat still, meditating on the scriptures he knew so well. In a quarter of an hour we left the temple, found our horses and rode home. On the way I asked Detsan how he could participate in so much ritual while he preached to me that "true God is undefinable" and that "in order to serve God we do not need temples." He willingly answered my inquiry :

"There are many worships of the Absolute: the worship of incarnations like Buddha, Christ and Mohammed; the worship of ancestors, as in China and Japan; the worship of Mighty Spirits, and the worship of other personal gods. The eightfold path leads to a right understanding, and most of us cannot advance farther than the third or fourth step. But all steps, which finally lead men to heaven, are equally important, as each makes a link in the chain. Our temples, as any other temples, are for the ignorant, and it is our duty to help them to advance higher just by showing a due respect to their feeble efforts to serve the Father in the way they can, even though we might not believe in their foolish ritual."

A splendid feast awaited us at home, after which Detsan told my fortune. It was the same method I had seen before. A shoulder of a lamb was thoroughly cleaned of meat, and the bone placed on the hot ashes. Soon it began to crack. Detsan pulled it out, brushed off the ashes and began to analyse the involved zigzags. He was very attentive, then frowned and looked at me with kindness and sympathy.

"Altin Shoot," he began slowly, as if measuring his words, "many hardships and dangers are before you. Death is at all turns of your road. Do not fear, pray to God, and be patient, for you will escape just as you lose all hope. Go alone and avoid all people. This is the remedy."

He passed me a gao, a little talisman containing an image of Buddha. He also gave me a present of two good saddlebags filled with provisions.

The next morning I planned to go back to Koso Gol, and thence to Urga, where I intended to join some caravan to Kalgan. There I would take the railroad to Peking, Tientsin, Mukden, and finally Harbin, my hometown in Manchuria.

Alas! Man proposes, but God disposes. I was caught in a cyclone of events which I could neither

control nor escape. I was to remain lost in Mongolia for so long that finally my distressed parents would order our cathedral to hold the forty-day memorial services for me, their third lost son.

3

Morning came, a golden morning full of promising smiles and tranquil happiness. Surrounded by my friends, I mounted Genghis Khan.

"See those ravens?" said Gambo. "They predict a good trip for you, Altin Shoot. Good luck."

"Good-bye," said the women. "Good-bye," repeated the men, as I pulled the reins and the horse began to prance.

"Farewell, Detsan. Good-bye, Darkhat Kure," I shouted back, carried by the horse in a swift gallop. The whole family were on horses now. They were riding down the slope toward the monastery in order to participate in the festivities begun the day before.

How wonderfully intoxicating was the current of air as the horse carried me swiftly down the narrow valley; how wonderfully fresh the morning mist and the fragrance of the moist vegetation; how beautiful the endless ridges of hills with the charming variety of delicate colours blending with the sky at the horizon. I climbed the nearest hill and gazed at the panorama. It was beyond description, and I recalled one of Chaliapin's favourite songs:

Blest be these forests and valleys, these meadows, hills and waters,
And blest my liberty, and these skies blue,
And this my beggar's staff and threadbare wallet.
And prairie from bound to farther bound, and light of day and
dark of night,
And this my solitary path on which, a beggar still, I wander,
And every grassblade in the field, and star that's in the vault up
yonder.

Oh; might I but embrace all Nature, and mingle with its soul my
own,
Would I might clasp with one great gesture all me, my brothers,
friends and foes,
And in these arms embrace in rapture the universal mighty whole.

I rode on for several hours that enchanting morning, enjoying every minute of my solitary freedom. Most of Khathyl was still asleep when I reached the settlement. The Russian cattle were taken care of by Mongolian cowboys, so the Russians had no reason for getting up early. Moreover, the little trade that they carried on usually began later in the day, when the nomads were free from their morning routine. The trade itself was short and quick, as Mongols hate all gatherings of people and, therefore, dislike towns, to them the nest of all evil. They hurriedly leave the shops after the barter is completed. Especially do they hate the Chinese with their tricky ways and unmerciful exploitation.

Thick, white smoke was rising high into the sky above the Chinese shops. Their high gates kept the outside world away. Hungry dogs roamed inside the double fences like devils. Burglars would have no chance of climbing those formidable walls made of rough tree trunks. The inner wall is about four feet lower and one yard away from the outer wall. Unless a man is an exceptional athlete, he would fall between the walls and into the midst of the ferocious wolf dogs. In case he succeeded in making the second wall, he would be immediately surrounded by other dogs ready to tear him to pieces. Each Chinese establishment had about forty dogs guarding its premises.

My nervous horse began dancing as we entered Khathyl. It seemed that he also hated the ugly buildings and the evil people within them. And, indeed, after the spacious valleys, the narrow streets looked like treacherous traps.

I stopped at Dr. Guy's headquarters and knocked

at the thick wooden gate. Dogs began barking, a little window opened in the fence and an armed man looked at me suspiciously.

"Oh, hello, Moose," he exclaimed when he recognized me. Everybody in Khathyl called me Moose after that memorable reception given to me on my arrival in Mongolia.

I crossed the large yard and entered the house. A pleasant smell of country sausages, pancakes and fresh milk indicated that breakfast was being served. In a spacious hall ten men were sitting by the table. Dr. Guy was at the head of the table, while his young and attractive wife was serving the men.

I was met with cheers, and immediately joined the company at the feast. Seven pancakes, dozens of sausages and a big jug of cream put me in the best of spirits. Dr. Guy told me that a month ago the Cossacks had rebelled against idleness and, under the leadership of Colonel Kazagrandi, had left Khathyl eastward toward Manchuria, thirty-five hundred miles distant. My own colonel and his wife, Governor Zarin and his daughter, and the charming Captain Obolsky had left with them.

"So I am all alone in the world again," I said.

"Oh, no," replied a Cossack. "You may join us, if you wish." With these words, he turned toward their leader, Captain Ivanov, for confirmation. The latter looked at me seriously and said:

"Yes, we are going back to Russia . . . to fight."

Indeed, they intended to establish themselves in the marshy forests of Siberia, to live on hunting and the robbing of Communist supply stations. There was a rumour that General Pepeliaev, with a skeleton of his army, had retreated from the Reds up to the very Arctic, and Ivanov planned to join him eventually. I realized that it would take them a long time to cover those four thousand miles on their ponies, especially during the coming winter, and I had my doubts about

the venture. Even if they succeeded in crossing a country thickly infested with their merciless enemies, living among the Eskimos in the hope of raising another revolt against the Reds seemed to me absurd.

I had abandoned all hope of crushing the Reds after the defeat of the White armies. Nothing remained of those formidable forces which Admiral Kolchak and General Denikin had led almost to the very gates of Moscow. I wanted to go home, to attend to my personal affairs and rebuild my life.

I filled my bags with new supplies and by noon was on my way to Muren Kure, about seventy miles east of Khathyl. I had a wonderful time, both day and night. To think that in some three months I would be home! And, then, this horse of mine: is it not marvellous to have somebody to do all the walking for you? I felt like an ancient Roman with a thousand slaves to serve me. It was altogether too good to last.

My last happy night I spent on the shore of a beautiful little lake. In the distance I could see the dark silhouette of a small monastery on the slope of a low hill. Beyond rose the black wall of the forest. Flocks of migratory birds were settling in noisy crowds on the calm waters which shone like silver under the new moon. The sweet aroma of autumn flowers floated through the still air. Far above the blue-black velvet sky was strewn with a myriad bright stars. I recalled Detsan's night prayer: "Into the Highlands of Your temples let me go in my dreams." I sat there quietly and watched the lake. Stars were in the sky, stars were in the waters, and stars were in my heart.

The next morning was cool, foggy, unfriendly. The monastery and the lake could not be seen. Through the milky wall I heard the awakening birds and wondered where my Genghis Khan was. Each night I tied him securely to the small iron pole by a long rope. I had a hard time lighting the fire, as my flint refused

to work properly. Being busily engaged in breakfast, I forgot my horse again. Slowly I packed my saddlebags and rolled the bedding, consisting of two Mongolian gowns. One was lightweight for daytime use, and the other lined with lamb's wool for evenings. Lastly, I took the bridle in hand and went for the horse.

The horse was gone! At first I did not realize the whole significance of my terrible loss. The faithful animal had broken the rope and run back to his master and his native land. I looked for him all day, hoping against hope that I would find him somewhere in the hills. With a broken heart I returned to my camping place, threw the bags over my shoulders and left the beautiful lake where I had been so happy only a few hours before.

It was too far to return to Khathyl, so I decided to move on foot farther east. I hoped to obtain another horse somehow, so I carried my saddle with me. Completely exhausted, I slept that night in thick, high grass down the valley. I didn't eat all day. Neither did I care for a fire that night. I was too far gone in despair.

At dawn the next day I moved on. My progress was painfully slow, burdened as I was with a full load. In the afternoon a Mongol crossed my path. No, he had not seen any horse that resembled my Genghis Khan. Moreover, he thought that it was impossible to get any horse here in exchange for the trifle of baggage I carried. Work? Why, who would think of working after the autumn thanksgiving to the gods? He was sorry that he could not help me.

It was the same story wherever I went. After a week I needed new supplies, so I got rid of the saddle. The time arrived when my fur coat was exchanged for food; the other soon followed it. The saddlebags bought me another and smaller supply of cheese and grain. Heat during the day and bitter cold at night, together with the lack of food, badly undermined my health. My feet became swollen again and bothered

me considerably. Nothing but rags remained on my shoulders and I was forced to walk barefoot. Unkempt, unshaved and underfed, I presented an unsightly picture. Children ran from me and adults turned their dogs on me. One evening several Mongol riders surrounded me in an open field. They carried long, thick poles in their hands and I saw my end. One fellow hit me in the ribs. I fell down, blood streaming from my mouth.

Through half-closed eyes I saw another rider raise his horse on its hind legs in order to strike me with the front legs. I turned my head in time to escape the crushing hoofs. Suddenly I heard a loud voice: "Halt!"

An elderly man bent over me and looked at the talisman Detsan had given me.

"We have made a bad mistake," he said. "This man is from Darkhat Kure. Lift him to the horse."

Slowly we went up the hill, descended into a small valley, turned into a narrow canyon and entered a wide pasture. Great numbers of cattle were gathered for the night. Sheep were lying like balls of white cotton on the slope. Women were chopping firewood for supper. As they saw us coming, they straightened up and watched us with curiosity. "Urus, Urus," I heard them calling, and soon the whole settlement surrounded us.

Meanwhile we dismounted. The old man ordered some butter, from which he shaped the figure of a man. This was a zolic, or evil spirit. A fire was lighted round it and the zolic melted away. This ceremony indicated that there could be no more misunderstanding or hard feelings among us. We entered a yurt and I was placed in front of Buddha. The Mongols began to pray in a monotonous rhythm. After we had eaten supper, the neighbours left and the old man, his wife and I remained in the hut. While they were preparing their bedding, I plunged into deep meditation

and unintentionally said to myself Detsan's formula : " Into the Highlands of Your temples, lead me in my sleep." The old man turned sharply and looked at me : " Urus, sain beina. I will take you to-morrow to a friend of mine where you can earn your living and cure your ills."

At daybreak the old man saddled two horses and we rode to the very summit of the mountain. For a few moments we stood there lighting our long Chinese pipes. The old man pointed down the valley to our right.

" See that rider ? He is going to Muren Kure."

" How do you know ? " I asked in surprise.

" His saddlebags are empty. He is going to shop and Muren Kure is the closest place."

We rode along, always keeping to the tops of the hills.

" You can gather more news," said the old man, " if you ride the hills instead of valleys. It is warmer, too."

My companion seemed to know everything and everybody around. With sleepy, narrow eyes and unexpressive face he swung from side to side in his saddle, apparently paying no attention to the view. However, nothing escaped his sharp eyesight. The Mongolian scenery is stationary, and anything that moves attracted the attention of the nomad.

The old man told me that when they had seen me the day before walking in the valley alone, they had thought I was a pilgrim going to the monastery as a penance. But when they observed that I was not kneeling and praying every so many steps, they were sure I was a reincarnated lonely wolf. They wanted to kill me in order to liberate my soul and end my misery.

We made about forty miles and finally descended to an open plain crossed by a long, narrow river. Small bushes and low trees grew on its banks. Some distance away a transparent veil of blue smoke was visible. Here the man who was to be my new master lived. He was a red lama. Carpentry was his side line when

prayers and medicine did not balance his budget. Karma Lolomi was his name, and I was to help him build simple Mongolian wagons.

He met us quietly and modestly. A hospitable smile lit his pleasant face, but his thoughtful eyes were sad. With a mellow voice he directed his charming wife to serve us tea. His manners were slow and reserved, as of a man who minded his own business but still liked friendly interruptions. My old man, with his theory of reincarnation, told him my story. After several cups of tea, Karma casually remarked that he was going shortly to Kiakhta on the Russian border and could take me with him. It appeared that he had been in Russia several times in the past and now would like to do something for a Russian in return for that hospitality. Kiakhta was about fifteen hundred miles east and, of course, I was tremendously happy to make that trip. From Kiakhta I would follow the border another thousand miles east to Hailar in Manchuria. At Hailar I would board the Chinese Eastern Railroad, of which my father was an executive, and arrive at Harbin, my hometown.

My ability to grasp simple ideas of Mongolian carpentry soon won the respect and benevolence of Karma, and my white skin swept his wife from amazement to admiration. It did not resemble the soles of Mongolian boots, but was "white as milk." Once she brushed my skin with her wet finger to see whether the white would come off.

I was given very good care and in a week's time I was a new man. One early afternoon a Russian boy of about thirteen arrived at our place. He alighted from his saddle and without any ceremony addressed himself to me, saying that his father upon hearing a rumour of my presence had sent his two sons to search for me and deliver "the poor devil" to his house. Without any further explanation, the boy grabbed my small belongings, put them over his saddle and told

me to mount the horse. They lived about twenty-five miles away, and I thought it could do no harm to visit them. I bade farewell to Karma and we departed, two men on one horse, and at a gallop, "to be there by supper," as Mitka, my new friend, explained to me. He industriously whipped the horse, and I did my best not to fall out of the saddle during that uncomfortable ride.

We rode in a north-easterly direction and reached the opposite side of the valley by sunset. The river, Egin Gol, made a sharp turn there, emptying into the Selenga. Farther on steep rocks rose on both sides of the magnificent stream and the river dashed in an uproar through the gorge and into another valley beyond. On the banks of Egin Gol were two little huts and a mill. The place was both picturesque and ideal for trade and industry. The rivers, no doubt, had plenty of fish; the forest must be full of game; the swift current of the river gave a wonderful supply of energy for the flourmill; and the soil itself was rich and black as tar. A well-beaten road passed close by. It led to Bangai Kure, and thence to Urga. A ferry across the Selenga could be seen a short distance away. However, the little settlement did not look at all prosperous.

A man and a woman stood by the door of one of the huts and waved us a welcome. Both were dressed in Russian peasant costumes. The woman wore a kerchief on her head, and the man had on a bright yellow blouse, wide blue pants, and high leather boots. A narrow black leather belt with silver trimmings indicated that he was a Cossack.

"What on earth are you doing in Mongolia?" shouted the man, grabbing me in his mighty arms and lifting me to the ground.

"The idea!" muttered the woman, inspecting me thoroughly and unceremoniously as a grandmother would inspect her child. Apparently she did not like my appearance, for she shook her head in desair.

We entered the log house. It was some five yards square. A quarter of it was taken by a large Russian oven, and another quarter was occupied by a huge bed with old-fashioned curtains at the sides. At the rear of the room stood an unpainted table with long wooden benches, and above it and in the corner a number of cheap ikons hung from the ceiling. An embroidered towel was arranged like a frame around the holy images. Three small windows were cut in the rough wooden walls, facing in three directions. A very small vegetable garden could be seen outside, fenced off from the rest of the grounds.

We all sat at the table. The man became serious. The woman looked at me with tears in her eyes, resting her head on the palm of her hand. Mitka stood by his father, and another son, Alexei, seventeen years old, sat in the corner with some unfinished work. Solemnly, with bent head, the man began at last his simple speech.

"We will not ask questions ; nevertheless, we wish to know whether you believe in God."

"I do," I answered, curious to know what was coming.

"Then put a cross on your chest," commanded the man in the tone of a justice of the peace.

I rose to my feet and crossed myself in the old-fashioned Moscow fashion, bending low before the ikons.

"He is all right, wife," exclaimed the man happily. "Serve the supper."

The hut immediately was filled with the rattle of dishes and the tramp of heavy feet. We lighted our pipes, and the Cossack told me his simple story. His name was Pavel. He and his brother, Osip, had left Russia after the revolution. For his work at the mill, the local noyon permitted them to settle there. The mill was his property. However, he forbade the two brothers to hunt, to fish or to insult the good earth

by ploughing it into fields and gardens. At times it was hard, indeed, to provide food for the families. Recently they had received permission to plant some potatoes and to raise chickens. Besides that, they fished at night. A few cows gave them milk and thus, somehow, they kept body and soul together.

All this was said in a rather apologetic tone, for their poverty was apparent. Presently the door opened, and a huge black man entered the hut. He was Osip, who lived next door.

"Hello, there," he exclaimed as if we had been friends for years. From behind the man, a little woman appeared. This was his wife. He had a daughter of about sixteen, and an adopted son, a poor Buriat dwarf. They all wanted to hear the latest news about their beloved motherland. Engrossed as we were in our conversation, we did not notice how late it was becoming. That night I slept with Mitka and Alexei on the floor.

I stayed a week with these hospitable people. They suggested that I should settle there, build my own hut and become a partner to the community. Perhaps I could even marry their daughter and be happy. Oh, they would love to have grandchildren! The girl was a splendid rider. I marvelled at the ease with which she broke the broncos. She was slender, with flying black hair, red cheeks and bright black eyes. Maroosya was her name.

I learned quite a bit about Mongolia during those happy days. At least I knew that Bangai Kure is second in size to Urga, that there were some hundred wealthy Russian colonists with numerous children who needed schooling; that many caravans go from there to Urga and thence to China, and that a man of my talents could certainly make a comfortable living, and even save a little money.

On the other hand, I learned more about hard times and the privations that Pavel and Osip were going

through, and I was ashamed to eat their bread. Quite naturally, I resolved to go on to Bangai Kure. At that time Osip had received a consignment of hides to deliver to Muren Kure. In a couple of days he would be going in the direction of Bangai Kure, and then he would turn westward. He would take me with him and deliver me to a Buriat settlement, which was anxious to secure a Russian teacher for the winter. They offered a yurt and firewood. Food would be provided by the parents in rotation, and a horse would be delivered at the end of the school season.

Our caravan consisted of ten large Russian wagons. Osip and Alexei rode horseback and I was stationed in the rear to watch that nothing dropped from the wagons. Osip proved to be quite a navigator. Many Mongols would come to us from nowhere. Each time we would stop, and Osip would enter into a ceremonial exchange of pipes and endless talk. I am not sure whether we made fifteen miles a day or not. But Osip did not care, for he was having a wonderful time. All this talk with the Mongols about the roads was an impossible waste of time, for he knew the roads. But each time he pretended to be utterly ignorant, and the Mongols would excitedly explain to him where and how the well-marked road would turn over the next hill. "Sain beina," the Mongols would say at last, and we would move on until Osip had another opportunity to stop, smoke and exchange gossip and road descriptions.

We stopped for tea, for lunch, for dinner, and for tea again, and then for supper. At six the day's work was finished. The horses were put to pasture, we erected our tent, and I went to sleep to the accompaniment of Osip's conversation with another Mongol about the road to Muren Kure.

Osip went to Muren Kure often to visit the god-mother of his daughter. This lady was famous for her inexhaustible supply of strong liquor. I have a notion

that this fact alone might have decided the selection of her as godmother. Both Osip and the good lady so often agreed on sampling the wines that Alexei was attached to our caravan for the purpose of hiding from his uncle the money received for the hides until he would sober up on the way home. Ferocious in appearance, Osip was only a spoiled, carefree child.

We crossed several mountain ridges, and at last entered a long, broad valley, where our ways were supposed to part. It was late at night when we reached the end of the valley. The Buriat settlement was situated somewhere near, but it could not be seen in the darkness. While Alexei and I were preparing supper, Osip rode back and forth in the valley, howling like a demon, but the Buriats did not respond. And who would answer those awful curses hurled into the darkness? I think he was angry particularly because he was missing the opportunity to go into details about the road to Muren Kure.

The next morning we found that the Buriats had moved their yurts to a small valley on the far side of the hill at the foot of which we had encamped. There they were building winter houses of logs and had moved their scant supplies and the few cattle they had succeeded in bringing with them from Russia. Many of their cattle had perished in the high Sayan Mountains; the roads were too rough, the food too meagre, and the mountain rivers too swift.

The Buriats had just recently come to Mongolia and had not yet adjusted their housekeeping. Some of them were professional hunters and provided the rest with cheap meat; others were carpenters and blacksmiths for the neighbouring Mongolian population. They had enough milk from their cows. However, it was evident that they were still in a pioneering stage and, therefore, the mouth of a newcomer would work another and unnecessary hardship on them. I did not mention this to Osip, but after he had left the next

day I went unnoticed in the opposite direction toward Bangai Kure, some two hundred miles away.

I travelled on the hillsides, where I could see travellers below in the valley and negotiate my own way accordingly. It was considerably easier to locate nomads from the hills than from the valley, so every day I had lodgings and food in exchange for a little work. By the end of the week, when I was about twenty miles from Bangai Kure, I got very sick. It proved later that my hostess at the last place I stayed had fed me meat from a bull that had died from some disease. The man himself was terribly sick and I practically saved his life from poisoning. He was blue-grey in colour and appeared dead when I arrived. I undressed him, placed cold wet rags on his forehead and chest, and poured as much milk down his throat as he could hold. After he had several forced vomiting spells, we wrapped him in warm coats and he went happily to sleep. I received a "wonderful meat meal" as a reward and got sick myself.

I became dizzy. Dysentery developed quickly, and I began to vomit. Every five or ten minutes I had to lie down on the ground for breath. Then I would rise again and walk some more, reeling like a drunkard. I struggled along the whole day, enduring terrific agony. "Bangai, Bangai," was my only thought, and I pushed on like one demented. Finally I reached the Orkhon River. With great relief, I lay down on the shore and drank the sweetest drink of all: pure, cold water. The pain subsided somewhat. I turned on my back and placed my head in the stream, my face to the calm sky of late afternoon. A verse came to my mind, which I repeated again and again for no reason at all:

"How beautiful, how fresh the roses were."

At last, with great effort, I rolled over on my stomach, rose to my elbows, then to my knees, and finally to my feet. Up the hill I went, and suddenly saw a lonely

rider on the very top of the hill. He was not a Mongol, he was . . . Russian !

I stopped, awaiting developments. My knees shook ; I felt dizzy again and fell to the ground, rolling down the hill. The next moment I saw a young face bending over me with an anxious look. He held a cigarette in his mouth.

"Cigarette," I pleaded.

He took it out of his mouth and gave it to me. "Sorry, that's all I have," he added apologetically. "Let me help you now. There is a doctor at Bangai Kure, over that hill. Let's try."

I was too heavy for the eighteen-year-old boy to lift to the saddle, and I was too weak to walk up the hill. So we agreed that I should hold on to the stirrup and he would slowly pull me up, and thus we arrived safely at the summit.

At the bottom of the large, round valley, which looked like the immense crater of an extinct volcano, Bangai Kure appeared in all its barbaric splendour. A huge white, red and black monastery-castle was situated in the middle, with its advance towers projecting far from the main walls. These tower-shrines were decorated with hundreds of little brass bells, whose sweet chords we could distinguish even from that distance. Big prayer wheels were lined up in front of the main gates like guards on duty. Many red lamas were seen here and there in the narrow streets of the densely built settlement. A wide road separated the monastery from the civilian settlement of nice, clean Russian houses. Here lived the father of my young friend. He was the chairman of the local chamber of commerce.

Snow fell early that year. By the end of September the earth was covered with it, and Bangai Kure

became small and insignificant. Even the high temples lost their bright and glamorous aspect. The roads disappeared and life seemed to come to a standstill. In the clear air the smoke from the chimneys rose to the milky sky in straight columns.

I had been busily engaged in teaching for two weeks. Our school consisted of a hall, where we studied, and another room, in which I slept. My pupils ranged from seven to seventeen years of age and, accordingly, the subjects taught varied also. Penmanship, reading and spelling, together with advanced courses in literature, history and mathematics, were taught at the same time and the same place. Incidentally, all the pupils enrolled in the English class. I was quite satisfied with the arrangement, although I doubted the results. During that winter I expected to save enough money to pay my transportation to Urga. Moreover, I dared to hope that, by doing odd jobs at Bangai, I might earn enough money for the rest of the trip from Urga to Kalgan.

However, stormy events were rapidly approaching and we were all caught unprepared. The vibrations of the Russian communist revolution had begun to be felt even in Mongolia.

Much evidence against the criminal actions of the notorious Baron von Ungern-Sternberg and the gangster chieftain, Semenov, had been piling up at the office of the district attorney in Manchuria. However, the attorney was powerless to bring any legal proceedings against these two "gentlemen." But the time arrived when the retreating forces of Kolchak reached Transbaikalia, and the attorney seized the opportunity to submit his evidence. Many outstanding generals were called before a military court. Semenov was clever enough to deny his connection with the men affected and, as he acted through his subordinates, no direct evidence could be found against him. Baron Ungern, however, had to flee for his life.

The baron was a Buddhist, and had lived for many years in Mongolia. Now he announced to his troops, numbering some twelve hundred and fifty, that they were going into Mongolia to liberate the country of his faith from the Chinese yoke. He accused the Chinese of being Reds, or at least of playing into the hands of Russian Communists. Secretly he entertained another idea—that of carving an empire for himself out of Mongolia, Manchuria and Transbaikalia. Then he hoped to lead his Central Asiatic Empire against Europe, as Genghis Khan had done.

The Mongols knew the baron well, or thought they did. He had assisted them in fighting for their independence in 1912-1913. When he announced his intention of coming back for the purpose of fighting the hated Chinese, the news was hailed with great enthusiasm by Mongolian patriots. So much so, that in order to assist him Princes Tziben, Tohtoho and Naiden declared a mobilization of their own forces.

The Chinese had twelve thousand soldiers in Urga alone, and they maintained small parties throughout the rest of Mongolia. When the baron's plans became known to them, they began routing out and imprisoning all transient Russians, and those Russian colonists who fed, clothed, or otherwise helped Russian refugees. It was dangerous for me to stay in Bangai Kure.

In the middle of September the baron reached Aksha, a city on the Mongolian border. Here he re-equipped his men, replenished his supplies and, by the end of the month, entered Mongolia. Seventy bodyguards, sent by the Dalai Lama in Tibet, met the baron as his personal bodyguard.

In barbaric luxury and glory, Ungern moved through Mongolia, and by the middle of October began hostilities against the Chinese at Urga, the capital of the country and the stronghold of Chinese power. Meanwhile, Russian refugees, like mice in a burning building, ran back and forth in despair, looking for an escape.

But it could not be found. The north was blocked by Communists, the south by the dreaded Gobi Desert; the west was closed by an impenetrable and hostile Tibet. To the east were four thousand miles of travel between them and Manchuria. During that long journey, a person would be caught by either the Chinese or the baron's scouts, with death a certainty in either event.

Dark clouds of rumour spread over Mongolia and hid its sunshine. Everybody lived in deadly fear, abandoning their usual occupations: trade stopped, cattle were hidden in secluded valleys, and people ran for safety into the hills. Only the most daring remained at Bangai Kure. Several deserters from the baron visited the town on their way to Kobdo, where they hoped to escape Ungern's insanity. They related many horrible stories that made our blood curdle and aroused our indignation.

They related, for example, how the village of Buluktai was burned with the inhabitants locked in their huts; how Captain Vishnevsky was whipped to death; how the baron had strangled Colonels Lihahev and Yahontov; how his adjutant had killed Korotkov just to get his young and pretty wife; how Dr. Engelgard-Esersky was burned alive at the stake. I learned of the terrible death of a friend of mine, Captain Rujansky. He and his sixty-eight men deserted the baron one night, being unable to stand his atrocities any longer. Ferocious Chahars were sent after them and returned with a sack filled with sixty-nine human ears, as evidence that the baron's order had been carried out. Rujansky's beautiful wife was given to the Chahars as a reward. She went insane and died in agony.

One day Colonel X arrived at Bangai Kure. I recognized him at once, for he had been commandant of one of the most powerful fortresses in the Russian Far East. He was accompanied by his friend, Colonel

Z, and his nephew, a cadet about eighteen years old. They wore thin summer military uniforms, over which they had hung an incredible collection of Russian, Chinese and Mongolian rugs to keep their bodies warm. The cadet was suffering badly from frozen legs, and moved on primitive crutches made of rough forest wood. They all looked half human and half animal. I never saw men so haunted by fear.

No, no, they could not stay at Bangai Kure. They came just for information. Bread? No, they did not care for food. They were running away from the Chinese soldiers who had just murdered their friends. They had hidden under a pile of wood and saw everything. The Chinese loaded their two-wheeled wagons with refugees as they would load logs, and then they tied them down with ropes so that the men and women would not fall out on the road. After they reached the dumping ground, they chopped everyone to death with their swords and bayonets. Even before they left the place of execution the Mongolian wolf dogs began their feast on the white meat of the killed. No, no, they would not stay at Bangai Kure. They were going to build a log house at the Orkhon River and wondered if the colonists of Bangai would purchase fish in exchange for bread and salt. Also, they wanted to know whether the colonists would betray them to the Chinese.

We all looked in astonishment at these wild people. Somebody asked how they were going to take care of the sick boy.

"Oh, that's all right. We are going to kill him," answered the colonel, as if the subject were of little importance. I looked at the young man. His eyes filled with happy tears and he muttered his simple "Thanks" with such gratitude that a chill went along my spine.

That evening the pupils were dismissed and the school closed. Donning a Mongolian costume, I went

to one of the nomads who delivered hay and wood to the colonists at Bangai Kure.

For three days I lived in leisurely fashion, drinking Mongolian tea-soup and reading *Anna Karenina*, and then one cool morning when the wind blew its hardest we left our yurt for the fields, where hay was stored. Four of us had to take care of some fifty ox carts. We had a cloth tent, food supplies to last several weeks, a few broken cooking utensils, and firewood for the first night, as we expected to get plenty of underbrush in the forests.

To the accompaniment of unendurable squeaking on the part of the wagons, and at the speed of a mile and a half an hour, we finally reached a small secluded valley surrounded by a forest. A dozen large ricks of hay were seen in the field. Although it was late in the evening, we began loading the wagons. It was so cold that, in order to keep a little warm, I worked like a madman. Late at night we fed the animals and then crawled into our thin tent. There was no hole in the roof, and the tent was soon so filled with smoke that I was forced to lie on the ground to breathe. Snow was melted; we dumped into it some dirty pieces of meat, and when the water boiled we commenced our meal. It was dirty, smelly and full of foreign objects. After supper we closed our tent, and the poisonous fumes of charcoal began to fill our lodgings. We rolled on the frozen ground, barely cleaned from snow, and went to sleep. That night was the worst of my experience. I could not sleep for the cold the whole night through, while my more experienced companions snored comfortably.

I blessed the time when the Mongols woke up. It was about three o'clock in the morning. In the frozen milky moonlight we fed the fifty oxen, prepared tea for ourselves, harnessed the animals to the carts, and the caravan moved out of the valley toward Bangai Kure. At the slow pace we expected to cover as much

as fifteen miles that day, leaving another fifteen for the next day and arriving at Bangai Kure the morning of the third day. It would not have been so bad except for those carts. Each cart had two huge wheels made of six separate wooden blocks, which were kept together by wooden spikes. Hoops were unknown in Mongolia, and naturally the wheels fell apart periodically. The nose of the unfortunate ox would be torn then, and the whole caravan would be mixed up in a dreadful scramble. Then we would stop, unload the bad wagon, put the wheel together, reload the wagon, and move on until the whole thing would have to be gone through again.

We moved slowly, having tea often on the road to keep warm. The oxen would lie down then and have a rest, and the whole caravan looked like a long black cord thrown over the white prairie. In due course we reached the town, unloaded the hay and immediately left again. I did not notice any Chinese soldiers, but still I thought it safer not to visit any of my Russian friends. I was afraid most of all to reveal my identity to the Chinese merchants. They certainly would betray me at the first opportunity when the soldiers arrived.

For three long weeks we never returned to the yurts, but stayed in the open fields. Cold and hunger numbed my senses to the extent that I ceased either to feel or to think. One day a Cossack came on horseback to our tent. He looked at me in astonishment, then in superstitious fear.

"I heard that you are a remarkable man," he said at last, "and I can assure you that you certainly live up to your reputation."

He looked at me a few more minutes in silence and then said abruptly :

"Chinese soldiers have arrived at Bangai Kure. Look out."

He turned his horse sharply and dashed off at a

gallop. That night while we were eating our late supper we heard many horses galloping toward us in the dark. The Mongols hid me under their coats and went outside.

"Sain beina, Altin Shoot," I heard a friendly voice call, and I recognized the voice of one of the men at Bangai Kure. He had brought with him seven thoroughbred horses, the pride of the district. They belonged to several merchants who were afraid the Chinese soldiers would requisition them and take them to Urga. Now it was up to me to save them. I was supposed to climb that night to the topmost rocks and stay there "until called." I was given two huge dogs to guard the herd against wolves.

I rode all night, climbing higher and higher, and by daybreak I found a nice, secluded cavity on the summit. The valley below could be seen in detail and I could watch any passers-by on the road. I tied each horse by a long rope to bushes on the northern slope and fed my dogs with raw meat. While I was doing that, I suddenly realized that the raw meat would be my food too, as it was dangerous to light a fire. Philosophically, I cut a lump of meat and began stocially to chew the tough, tasteless stuff.

It was nice and warm during the day on the south side of the mountain. However, the night proved as bitter and cold as it had been in the valley below. In order to keep warm, I placed the dogs on each side of me, and the three of us had a little sleep. Then the sun came out again, comforting us with its warmth, and we sank into restful drowsiness until late in the day. We had our ration of raw meat and went to see the horses.

To my great dismay, I found that the thoroughbreds did not know how to dig out the dry grass from under the snow. I spent a whole day tearing up grass for them until my hands were bleeding. In spite of all, the horses remained deplorably hungry. They did not even touch the snow to lessen their thirst. While I

was working on the horses, the dogs stole the meat and had eaten almost half the supply before I noticed it and chased them away. As the dogs were our only salvation, I decided to stop eating so as to make up the deficiency.

A week expired and with it my patience. I was tired of dying of hunger, alone and helpless, like a lost sheep. One day I was sitting at the very top of the mountain on a bare rock, staring ahead without seeing anything, when suddenly I heard a dull noise. I looked at the dogs; they had heard it too, for they rose to their feet growling. I jumped, caught the dogs, and bound their mouths with string, so that they would not bark. Then we began slowly to descend the slope. I held the dogs by their collars, and we crawled behind rocks, bushes and trees, until we saw the intruder. It was a Mongol family, who were unfolding their yurt. Evidently they were running from the Chinese soldiers in order to save their lives and property. I called to them, and they almost collapsed from fear. But they soon recognized me, and we smoked our pipes of peace.

I told the head of the family of my difficulties, and we went up to my place. The Mongol looked the horses over and then said: "Bad, very bad." He went round them once more and then suggested that I should take the horses and ride far west. "On these seven horses you can make Kobdo in a short time." After a few minutes he added: "The horses will die soon, if you leave them here."

I knew the Mongols to be very honest, and therefore could hardly believe my ears.

"Such ingratitude to my friends is against our Christian laws," I answered in disgust.

"I did not tell you not to return," interrupted the nomad. "Some time in the spring, perhaps."

We stood in silence for a while, and then I asked whether he would be willing to go to Bangai Kure and

tell the people of the situation. No, he could not do that. The soldiers would kill him.

"I would be willing to go myself if you will guard the horses," I offered as an alternative. No, he would not do that because, if the rascals found him there they would beat him, but if they found the Russian horses they would kill him.

We argued bitterly for some time and then came to an agreement that I should leave the horses with the Mongol just for the night, and in the morning he would take them back to the mountain top. Then I wrote duplicate notes to be attached to the collars of the dogs, explaining where I had left the horses. In case I was killed, the dogs would carry the message home to Bangai Kure. This agreed upon, I immediately left the camp.

Down the slope we went, and entered the forest.

On some mountain ridges Chinese guards were stationed, so I decided to move along the middle of the slopes and through as much coverage as I could find. The dogs displayed remarkable intelligence. They were slow and silent, watching the neighbourhood, like the best army scouts. If I could not make headway, they would stop and wait for me. By the end of the day, I was so tired that suddenly I began to cry. One of the huge dogs came to me, placed his front legs on my shoulders and gave me an understanding lick with his tongue.

Late that night we completed our thirty miles and entered the outskirts of Bangai Kure. I chose the dumping ground where many dogs were eating garbage. Pretending to be a dog also, I crawled on all fours toward the settlement. Several times my faithful friends fought off other dogs which were about to tear me to pieces. At last we reached the end of the garbage heap. The dark and empty streets were before us; treacherous Chinese guards loomed at each dark corner. I visualized myself being caught, killed and thrown to those terrible dogs at the dumping

grounds, and my heart sank. I kissed the dogs, and pushed them forward. They would not run away at first, but then the temptation became too great and they disappeared in the darkness. I hoped that when the colonists saw the dogs and read the notes, they would be able to come to my rescue.

Meanwhile I rolled slowly like a log until I reached the first wall. Here I rose to my feet and made a cross at my chest. "Forward, Dmitri," I said to myself, "a man can only die once." My further moving could not be called "walking," because I pressed tightly to the dark walls like a shadow, moving sideways. In the dead stillness I was afraid that the terrific beating of my heart would be heard by the guards, and in order to stop that beating, which sounded like a drum to me, I breathed deeply through my open mouth. A patrol passed me at a short distance and I hid behind a prayer wheel. A monk dashed across the street and disappeared in a dark hole, like a mouse. The most awful thing was to cross that street in the open. I stood there for a long time watching the house opposite where my friends lived. At last I gathered enough courage to hurl myself across the street and in utter exhaustion leaned against the high fence with my arms stretched up to its very edge. Then with my last desperate ounce of strength I pulled myself over.

The next thing I remember was a dark cellar, lighted by one small candle. A crowd of my friends looked at me with anxious eyes.

"Dmitri, what have you done? They will kill you for sure. Oh, what have you done?"

I explained my reason for being there, and they exclaimed:

"How silly. Of course, you could take those damned horses and beat it to the west. Don't worry about the horses. To-morrow we will send a Buriat to take care of them, and you can run to Kobdo if only we can get you out of here. My God!"

Somebody offered me food, but a woman took it away from me, whispering that I might get sick again. We worked fast. I was dressed in a white sheepskin gown, my saddlebags were filled with food, and my papaha was passed among the colonists for contributions. Cautiously we crawled out and into the yard. They saddled a white Mongolian pony, opened the rear gate toward the open valley, and gave the whip to the horse. He leaped forward like an arrow, and soon we were lost in the vastness.

5

For three days I rode through high mountain ridges, keeping away from any habitation. By late evening of the third day, when the setting sun was staining the mountain peaks silver, gold and purple, I recognized the vicinity of Bulgun Tal. Far in the distance I saw the Selenga River, a beautiful stream, now locked with ice. The forest on its banks appeared as tiny as moss, and I realized how high up I and my horse were.

Somewhere around here my friends Pavel and Osip lived, but I would not see them. There was no time to lose. I would ride down the Selenga until I reached Kiakhta ; thence through the domain of Tsetsen Khan to Hailar on the Manchurian border.

It was dark when we camped that night. As an additional precaution, I crossed the river, forgetting that my directions for the next day would automatically change. And, indeed, next morning I moved up the river instead of down. Of course, I could distinguish east from west easily enough, but the river made many sharp turns, and I soon became confused. Not until noon of the fourth day, and only through a bad accident, did I discover my error.

On account of the extreme cold, the ice on the river had developed several deep and wide open crevices,

and my horse fell into one of them. Quickly, I severed three long poles from a tree and placed them across the hole. I tied the bridle to one of the poles, which kept the horse's head above water; I grabbed the tail, next, and tied it to another pole; then I pulled the stirrups up and put the third pole through them. I was confident that the horse would not perish before I could find some help.

Not long before the accident, I had heard a dog barking, which had worried me at the time. Now it seemed my only salvation. I ran across the river, through a little grove and into a meadow, at the end of which were two dark-grey yurts. The Mongols were frightened at first, but quickly grasped the idea, and we all galloped back to the river.

My horse greeted us from a distance with a weak neighing, and we soon found the poor animal. He seemed to understand his precarious position and kept very still. With many cries and shouts, we pulled the horse out of the water. Then I noticed that either the river was running in the wrong direction, or that I myself was a blind fool for moving up-stream all those days.

Although my disappointment was great, the well-being of my horse was of prime and immediate concern. We rode back to the yurts. My horse was covered with a coating of ice by that time. We lighted a big fire, and I wiped the animal with rags. In an hour he was dry again, after which I fed him well. Upon the advice of the Mongols, we left immediately, because the horse could warm himself on the road better than in a corral.

We rode down the stream now, but another accident again upset all my plans. Pitying my poor comrade, I rode that evening, not by the windy mountain ridges, but along the closed valley. Suddenly I saw three men madly galloping toward me. One of them was a slim Chinaman, and two were huge Mongols.

When they caught up to me, all descended and invited me to dismount too.

We had several drinks of powerful hanchi, and kissed sharp knives as a token of friendship. They inquired where I was from and where I was going, and upon discovering that I was a stranger, they immediately changed their attitude toward me. Nothing remained of their friendship. They inquired further whether I had a gun. Although I did not, I replied in the affirmative. We rode together until dark, when I became suspicious. We met several Mongols on the road, and there was something strange in their cold attitude toward our cavalcade.

The river entered a narrow canyon, and here on a small plateau a drove of horses was pasturing. Diligently they were digging out last year's grass from under the snow. To my surprise and alarm, my unwelcome companions unfastened their ropes and began chasing the horses. They exchanged them for their tired animals and told me to do likewise. But this was robbery, and I refused to do it.

"Oh, you won't, eh?" said one of the Mongols, and the next moment I saw the flash of a knife in his hand. I struck him in the mouth and he fell, pulling me down with him. The other two bandits dashed forward with their daggers ready to strike. I grabbed a long pole from the ground and began to defend myself, all the time retreating toward the river with its underbush and forest. There I lost them.

I penetrated farther and farther into the dark forest, reached the river, and sat down on a tree stump. My head was badly bruised and one hand cut. I had lost my horse, my saddlebags with supplies and silver, and my warm fur coat and hat. The situation was deplorable, even hopeless. What chance had a lonely man in a wild country during winter, without friends, without clothing, supplies, money or a horse?

I rose to my feet and walked downriver. A bright

moon made all shadows sharp. There were only two colours: ink-black and steel-white. Like a cooled precious metal, the stream lay heavily in its bed, its metallic surface running in zigzags through hills and forest, calm, silent, majestic.

It was dreadfully cold. I walked several hours trying to shake off that treacherous sleepiness which weighed heavily on me and which, I knew, could easily end in death.

Suddenly I heard that wonderful sound so welcome to weary travellers: the distant barking of a dog. I stopped and listened intently. No, it was a mistake. I moved five minutes more, and heard the barking again, but it was more distinct than before. A hope, hesitant and uncertain as a spark, lighted my heart. A dog means a man, and the man means food and a place to sleep. I walked ten more minutes, when I noticed the dark silhouette of a small log house at the top of the steep right bank of the river. It was a Russian hut.

Like a ball, a black dog rolled down the slope, and in rage began circling round me, barking and snapping, leaping forward and running away like a demon. The people in the hut were asleep, or maybe they thought that this was just another fight with a wolf. Nobody came to my assistance.

I got tired of being teased by the beast, and then I became angry. I stooped in the position of a wrestler and waited for that particular leap with which a dog forces his opponent to the ground in order to catch him by the throat. My partner in the ring understood the challenge. He dashed forward with his eyes burning like hot coals and foam dripping from his mouth. I met him with a powerful blow to the stomach. He fell, and I sprang and covered him with my body. With both hands I grabbed him by the throat, and with both knees I jerked and danced on his stomach until his ribs were broken and he died. I got to my feet, grabbed the beast by the tail and

pulled it after me for some ten minutes before I realized what I was doing. Then I dropped the dead dog and apathetically walked along the river.

A little later I stopped dead in my tracks, when somebody cried threateningly: "Halt!" I stood stiffly, waiting for my enemy to appear in the moonlight. A man holding his rifle ready to shoot advanced cautiously. I saw that he was a Russian in civilian clothing. He looked me over and apparently understood my condition. He didn't ask any questions, but simply ordered: "Go, in front."

We entered the forest. My companion moved rapidly, like a man who knew the road well. In five minutes we climbed an open bank of the river, with a wide, flat valley running toward dim mountains. Four big log houses stood on the shore in fortress formation, with a high log fence around. This was a Russian settlement with a mill and a tanning factory.

My guard pulled the chain at the massive gates, and a loud bell rang inside. The gate opened and we entered.

We crossed the empty yard and entered a long building. Red Chinese candles on the large, unpainted table dimly lit the hall. Apparently, it was a mess-room, for I noticed a large Russian oven in the corner. A man was asleep on a bench. He was small and delicate, and of a dark southern complexion. He wore a rich Chinese coat and awkward Chinese fur pants. The Cross of St. George hung on his breast and an insignia of the Russian Imperial Flying Corps was displayed at his shoulders.

"Mike, oh, Mike. Wake up," the man escorting me shouted.

"Ah . . . What the hell's the matter now?" replied Mike, yawning. Then he noticed me and sat up. His eyes became cold and piercing, and with his right hand he reached for his holster.

"Do you believe in God?" he said sharply.

"I do," I replied.

"Then make a cross,"

I did so.

"All right, then. I see you are another crusader, the same as we are. How did you like being beaten, robbed, and thrown out into the wilderness to perish? You were defenceless, were you not? All right, I'll show you something else."

He lifted a dishpan and, with the butt of his revolver, struck it once, twice, three times. A loud sound reverberated through the building, and immediately I heard many men running. They were barely dressed, but all carried rifles and ammunition. I counted eleven in all. They looked anxiously at Mike, apparently eager to dash anywhere at his orders.

"This man, *our* man, was robbed to-night. He says there were two Mongols and one Chinaman. Now, six of you get your horses and bring those fellows here. But alive, please," he added nonchalantly.

Six of the men dressed rapidly, asking me about the details and location of the occurrence. Naturally, I offered to accompany them, but Mike stopped me.

"No, we don't know you yet. You stay here."

Soon we heard the horses in the yard, the gate swung open with a harsh noise, and then the sound of the galloping horses gradually died in the distance.

Meanwhile Mike rearranged his "bedding." It consisted of a long military coat spread over an unpainted bench, with saddlebags for a pillow. At last he turned and said:

"Now, you go to sleep. Find a place somewhere around here."

"Thanks, but may I ask you . . ."

"Explanations? All right, young man. We are refugees, some of those refugees who are humiliated, tortured and killed by the Chinese. Now we begin to organize. Men are assembled by Sooharev on the

Selenga, Kazagrandi at Bulgun Tal, Kazantzev at Uliassutai, Kaigorodov at Altai, and Taphaev at Uriankhai. And we grow all the time. Our motto is to get your man before he gets you, and our means of attaining that end is *killing*. Anybody who dares to show mercy will be shot too. Now, good night. I'll see you to-morrow morning at breakfast."

Indeed, they brought my "friends" alive next morning. Not in good condition, I admit, but considering that they had been dragged by lassos for some ten miles, the captives were all right. Of course, they would have been in worse condition if the snow had not covered the roughness of the road.

Like caught wolves, they sat on the ground in the corner of the yard, casting evil looks. We gave them picks and shovels and they dug their own graves. Deaf to protests, pleadings and sobs, we stabbed both Mongols to death, and the Chinaman buried them. We hanged the third bandit by his pigtail, as killing a Chinaman outright would have been an undeserved mercy. He died later in dreadful agony, and our dogs feasted on him for several days. I watched all this, even participated in some of it. When a man has been through what I had since the revolution, he loses a great many civilized qualities. . . .

Thus a new chapter in my career began. All kinds of soldiers were found in Mike's group, which totalled sixteen men, including myself. There were ten Cossacks, two infantry officers, two cavalry officers; Mike had been commander of a flying squadron, and I was an artillery officer. By the time of my arrival they had succeeded in cleaning the country of Chinese for some hundred miles round. They burned all Chinese settlements, killed their inhabitants, and robbed them of their property: gold and silver, horses and cattle, clothing and food—everything.

As an initiation gift, I was granted a wonderful new pair of riding boots, fur pants, and a long fur

coat covered with dark-cherry silk. I received a rifle, a Chinese Mauser revolver, and a sabre.

Two days later, Captain Ivanov with his seven men arrived at our fortress, which, by the way, had been deserted long before by colonists in fear of forthcoming events.

Ivanov's group was in pitiful condition. They had gone to Russia, but the Communists chased them back to Mongolia. They were underfed, underclothed, without any ammunition. Dangerous men they were, ready to bite and to kill. Killing was a great pleasure to them, not only because it postponed their own deaths, but also because it increased their strength, providing new ammunition, food and clothing. They brought us much news.

On October 26 Ungern had commenced his siege against Urga. There being twelve thousand Chinese against twelve hundred Russians, he was thrown back. On October 31 he ordered another attack, and suffered heavy losses in men and ammunition. The onslaughts of November 3 and 4 were also unsuccessful, so much so that the baron retreated to Ubulun and then to the Tirilnja River. Men in great numbers were deserting him, but they were always caught and barbarously killed.

To maintain discipline, he introduced penalties that only his insanity could have invented. Those penalties began with whipping by bamboo lashes. A hundred strokes were considered a mild reminder. Saltanov was given fifty bamboo strokes every day for ten days, until his flesh was cut through to the bone. He was taken to the hospital to be cured so that more bamboo could be administered. He was beaten for two months and finally went insane, and the executioners shot him. The next in severity was penalty by exposure. A man would be kept on the roof, in a tree or on the ice of the river for several days without fire or cover and on a diet of raw meat.

Sometimes they burned the hair on the victim's head or set fire to paper between the legs; poured water through the nostrils, or turpentine into the rectum; pushed pointed sticks under the fingernails or through the ears, or baked a man on a slow fire. The favourite and most used penalty was lashing to death.

A dull protest rose among us, and Mike expressed the sentiment of all of us when he said laconically: "Impossible."

"Impossible? Then listen to the death of your friend Chernov." And Ivanov told us an awful story of the execution of my school chum. He was a handsome boy, strong in physique and mind, and had been one of the most promising students at the consular school at Vladivostok before the war. I never could reconcile his later behaviour. As a result of unsuccessful battles at Urga, wounded arrived in such numbers that they could not be taken care of at the front lines. Chernov was assigned to deliver those unfortunates to Aksha, the central hospital. During that trip there was much gaiety, drinking and gambling. The result was that those wounded who had a little money of their own began to die. When the party reached Breven Hit, they learned that the Communists had driven Semenov from Transbaikalia and taken possession of all towns, including Aksha.

Chernov ordered his caravan to move to Manchuria, another fifteen hundred miles east. As they had to move along the Soviet border, it became imperative to move fast; therefore, all the seriously wounded were poisoned. Meanwhile, the baron retreated to the Kerulen River and sent orders for Chernov to return. Of course, Chernov should have been court-martialled and shot, but then had not the baron himself once ordered his chief physician, Klingenberg, to poison all men sick with scurvy from lack of proper food? And the long-faced aristocrat had light-heartedly committed that awful mass murder. As a

matter of fact, what Chernov had done was the exact thing Ungern himself advocated in order to get rid of the troublesome invalids.

Yet Chernov was given four hundred strokes of the bamboo, and all the time the executioners sprinkled his torn bloody flesh with salt. When he lost consciousness, they placed him on ice to recuperate. After he recovered a little and came to his senses, they tied his arms and legs together and hung him on a tree "like an angel," to use their technical expression. Below the tree in front of General Riazuhin's tent, they made a huge bonfire. Into it they slowly lowered Chernov. As he was about to suffocate, they lifted him. They did this repeatedly, until the man's lips cracked, his nose burned off, his eyes fell out, and all his clothing disappeared in ashes. He did not give much satisfaction to his tormentors, as he went through the agony silently. Only at the very end he began to growl, shaking his formless head. Then he gathered his last strength and uttered a horrible curse on all the men assembled to enjoy his death. The body was again lowered and the rope cut. The hissing flames embraced him with sparks.

We sat in deep silence for a long time, and then Mike said :

"What the hell's the matter with the baron?"

"His biography is as dirty as his deeds," answered Ivanov, filling his pipe. He took several long puffs, and then continued slowly.

"I know Baron von Ungern-Sternberg only too well. We were in the same Nerchinsk Cossack Regiment on the German front. He was born in 1887. His family belongs to a very old line of Otsei knights who came on a crusade against Russia at the end of the twelfth century. They established the city of Riga as their stronghold against the Slavs. The Ungerns were notorious for extravagance and extremes. Two of his forefathers became sea pirates. One of them was

subsequently defeated by Hollanders in the Indian Ocean. He escaped and lived a long time in India, becoming an orthodox Buddhist. He brought home his beliefs when he returned to die at Riga.

"The baron began his career as a midshipman after graduating from an exclusive naval cadet school at Petrograd. However, the strict regulations did not suit him. He longed for adventure. So he resigned from the navy and came east, where he joined the Argun Cossacks in Transbaikalia. In a short time he became an excellent rider and a famous swordsman. A gentleman when sober, he was a wild beast when drunk. He fought many duels and finally was expelled from the regiment. A strong pull at the capital put him in the army again, but in the most remote spot of the Far East—Blagoveshchensk. He rode there on horseback and with his falcon, for he loved that ancient sport. He was almost expelled again for being several months late, but somehow he stayed. He attempted to fight one of the officers of his Amur Cossack regiment, and would have been killed except for the gallantry of his opponent. He was brought before the army court of honour, which expelled him again, but now without a right to re-enter the army under any circumstances. He went to Mongolia, organized a band of cut-throats, and began robbing merchants' caravans. He fought against the Chinese for Mongolian independence in 1912, after which he became a bandit again. He knows Mongolia like his own hand; he knows its customs, religion and superstitions, and now he acts accordingly, thereby gaining great prestige among the nomads.

"After the outbreak of the World War, he sent a petition to the emperor to permit him to die for his beloved motherland, Russia. Patriotism was running high at that time, and he was admitted to a Cossack regiment under the command of Wrangel, our famous leader in the Crimea. Naturally, the baron was

ostracized and snubbed by the rest of the officers, which so angered him that he dashed into battle like a lunatic. Soon he had received all decorations that there were to be granted for bravery and heroism, including the Cross of St. George. Then promotions were forthcoming as a reward. He is now Major-General at barely thirty-three. His varied, exciting life, together with a sabre cut on his head, unbalanced him, and I venture to say that he is insane most of the time."

Captain Ivanov ended, and we looked at our leader, expecting his comments and decision.

"Well, then, he is bad company," Mike said finally. "We had better disappear before it is too late."

The men were called together in a circle, and upon discussion of the matter we unanimously decided to move west and join Colonel Kaigorodov in the Altai Mountains. However, as we needed more ammunition we decided to attack Muren Kure first. The Mongols had reported to us that fifty Chinese soldiers had made camp there.

We spent several days in packing, while Ivanov's men rested and recuperated. I never saw men so happy as when they put on new clothing and burned their rags in a bonfire.

All were active and gay. And, indeed, there was good reason for everybody's gaiety: we would be out of the baron's clutches in Altai, the Golden Mountains, a mysterious country whose history is unknown and whose legends form a fascinating fairy tale. The Altai became our dream, our song, our determined aim.

A soft, fluffy snow was slowly falling as we saddled our horses and loaded the sarlicks with our supplies and ammunition. The sarlick is a peculiar animal, to

say the least, and I never could get used to it. It resembles the cow, buffalo, horse, poodle, boar and rhinoceros. I have since learned that the English name for it is "yak," but the Russian term seems more natural to me still.

In size the sarlick is like a cow, and can be milked. Long, thick hair covers its whole body and hangs to the ground, like the fur of the poodle. It is blue-black and shiny. The eyes are set abnormally high and in the front part of the forehead. Its voice, as well as its manner of using it, is that of a boar. In its mischievous, quarrelsome and bloodthirsty character it resembles the rhinoceros. Of its own accord it will attack and chase wolves and kill them. I knew of a case when one sarlick killed a pack of six wolves. It likes raw meat, and has a great appetite for dead men, whom Mongols usually throw out of their yurts. Sarlicks originated in Tibet, and are excellent beasts of burden, especially on rough roads.

Our caravan consisted of twenty-three horses and ten sarlicks. We rode in single file, thereby concealing our number. The falling snow obliterated the surroundings, and soon the fortress disappeared behind the white wall of moving snowflakes. It took us three long hours to cross the valley and reach the low, wooded hills. We climbed many of them, rising higher and higher, and after four more hours of struggle reached the summit or ridge. Here we had lunch, and a short rest, then moved along the ridge in a south-westerly direction, keeping under rigid observation each cavity and valley on both sides. By that time it had stopped snowing and we could see far into the distance.

The country looked completely desolate. As far as the eye could see, white snowy peaks rose in huge armadas to the very horizon. With the loneliness a sense of safety and security came to us. We liked to be alone, and to be left alone. Indeed, most of the time we

felt like hunted wolves. The Chinese hated us because of the baron and his army ; the old Russian colonists detested us as trouble-makers ; the Mongols feared us as a suspicious roaming band of dangerous loafers.

The Chinese made a handsome profit on refugees, selling them to the Bolsheviks for fifty dollars a head. In the interior they were mercilessly exterminating the strangers. Well-known and important people were thrown into dark prison cells and kept there without food or clothing. A selected few for whom a good price might be forthcoming were kept in the famous Chinese boxes. These were of such a size that the prisoner could neither lie down nor sit up. In the middle of the box was a round hole and it required ingenuity for the inmate to get his face to the hole for a breath of air. Long, low cages with iron bars in front were filled with Russian refugees whose crime consisted only in refusing to surrender to the Communists. The ceilings of those cages were purposely made so low that the prisoners could not sit up, and they were packed so tightly that they could not lie down. Cold, hungry and thirsty, they were subjected to indescribable sufferings. Naturally we were always glad to hear about the Chinese, to whom we planned to pay a visit that would not soon be forgotten.

At the end of the day we selected a hollow place among the mountains and dismounted. While some men began unloading our animals, others took shovels and cleaned the snow from a wide space before the cliff, and still others went into the forest to cut dry dead trees. Soon a dozen logs were piled in a long row opposite the wall of the cliff. Several fires were set simultaneously, and the logs began burning. The snow melted quickly between the huge fire and the cliff, and we spread our saddle blankets on the dry ground. The saddle bags and the rest of the cargo were placed close by, and the horses and sarlicks were put to pasture on last year's grass.

Supper was soon ready, and we all came together in a gay crowd, leaving guards by the cattle and up the mountain ridge. It was very warm by the fire, and we threw off our heavy fur coats. A good-sized sheep was soon consumed. Tea followed, after which everybody lighted long Mongolian pipes, and the story-telling began.

Although all the men had good military background and could relate many of their experiences during the World War and the Russian revolution, most of our stories centred around our peace-time life in the beloved motherland, with its dense forests, endless prairies, high snow-clad mountains and many thousand miles of majestic rivers. In an undertone we sang our folk songs in chorus, which carried us back to Russia. We all were homesick.

My two hours of duty as a guard fell at four o'clock in the morning, the time when sleep is heaviest and most pleasant. I pulled on my heavy coat, took the rifle and went round the camp. The cattle slept lying in the snow, and the horses stood motionlessly together.

In the darkness our camp-fires glowed like rubies. A mass of fur coats, with bare feet protruding here and there, was spread on the ground. Hot charcoal already covered the logs, and they shed a powerful heat toward the sleeping men. I sat close by and listened intently to the mysterious sounds of the great outdoors. Silence has a peculiar music of its own, or maybe there is no absolute silence in the world. In the light breeze the trees spoke to each other; suddenly a mound of snow slid down with a sharp hissing sound; in the distance a pack of wolves complained to the moon in sad chorus; some of the horses sighed, and the sarlicks grunted like pigs; an owl moaned, and then dashed after its prey down the valley; men rolled in their sleep, smacking their lips as babies do in sleep; and again all was still.

I looked up. The heavens seemed far away and

indifferent. Of a sudden I felt desperately lonely. Lonely as a man on a small island in the wide stormy sea.

I set my pipe going and went to the horses. I sat by my white pony, and confessed to him how awful it is to feel like a mouse in a trap. Embracing him by the neck, I felt his warm body and the rhythm of his calm breathing. Like a good friend, he patiently let me find comfort in his common sense and good will.

Meanwhile the skies grew lighter, and Orion sank to the horizon. It was time to prepare hot water. Soon twenty-three men would demand their breakfast. I must hurry. I filled all our utensils with snow and melted it, pouring this supply of water into large jugs. Being very busy I soon forgot about myself. One of the men woke up. He sat up and yawned so loudly that I was afraid the horses would stampede. He spat into the fire, filled his pipe and began to smoke.

"Go to sleep, Dmitri," he said to me lazily. "I'll do the rest."

Without much persuasion, I immediately took his warm place and dropped into a dreamless sleep.

After two days' travel we reached the vicinity of Muren Kure. We camped at the top of a high mountain overlooking the large valley. By the Muren River a Chinese military settlement could be seen. Many such settlements were established by the Peking government after they took possession of Mongolia at the end of 1919. Just as Russia took advantage of the Chinese revolution in 1911 to tear away Mongolia for itself, China now returned the courtesy, and during the Russian revolution pulled Mongolia back under its rule.

Those military settlements were supposed to occupy themselves with agriculture and cattle raising, and with guarding the country. However, theory and practice differed here as elsewhere in the world. Groups of soldiers under the leadership of some ambitious corporal

lived a leisurely life, simply levying taxes on the nomads in their respective districts.

That night we had a cold meal and slept without a fire. Even smoking was forbidden. By two in the morning we began the descent into the valley, and by four o'clock we silently surrounded the little fortress containing fifty soldiers. Several of our men went forward and set fire on all four sides of the high log walls, and then joined us in the forest. Soon the fences were alight, and the buildings began burning. The smoke and red light of the fire woke the Chinese soldiers. They dashed out of the barracks hardly dressed, and we picked them off one by one as they came into view. Those who preferred to remain in the buildings and defend themselves did not live long, as the dry houses crashed to the ground until nothing was left of the fortress but a heap of smouldering ruins. They all perished without even knowing who their enemy was, as not a single sound was uttered by us in the dark forest. The rifles did the work. In a chain, like a huge noose, we left the forest and approached the settlement. All the wounded were stabbed to death. After the job was finished, we sat by the fires and prepared our breakfast, which we ate with appetite, notwithstanding the scenes of destruction and death around us.

Under the ruins of one house we found a door leading to a cellar. Here the ammunition had been stored, and to our great delight we found a Maxim machine gun such as we had used in the Russian army. Naturally our ambitions increased accordingly, and we decided to equip ourselves in splendour before joining Kaigorodov in Altai. We turned north to call at Khathyl, Darkhat Kure and Hanga by the very border of Communist Russia. We carried with us fire and death to all Chinese.

We paid our respects to Dr. Guy, from whom we received valuable information regarding events in Urga,

which the baron had made a desperate effort to capture with his small force.

"He is insane," said Dr. Guy. "Probably he will soon declare a mobilization of the whole Russian population, and we all will have to go. Too bad. But eventually the baron will break his neck, for he will never gain the support of the population by his atrocities. The Bolsheviks will get him, although they temporarily let him loose, as he does a good job for them. The Communists want the baron to desecrate the word 'Whites' until it becomes synonymous with bandits and cut-throats. They will advertise throughout the country the notorious reputation of the baron's army so that never again will Whites be able to induce the Russian population to rise in revolt against its present Red rulers."

We agreed with Dr. Guy but, as with all young people, trusted our emotions more than our common sense, and tried to hold to some remnant of belief in our cause. We spent several days in Khathyl, enjoying decent meals and sleeping in warm dry houses. We also took great delight in washing ourselves in the doctor's large bath-house. I admired his courage when he protested against our bloodthirsty expeditions. "Don't be damned fools; you are burning your bridges behind you." We did not understand him then.

We found ten Cossacks at Dr. Guy's ranch and all of them joined us. They were from the Tunka district, which they offered to visit "some dark night."

"It is not dangerous," they told us. "Thirty-three of us can easily defend ourselves against any village posts. We know the country like our five fingers, and can lead our party by unknown trails back and forth."

Most of us were in our early twenties, and none had reached thirty, and all were still in love with daring adventures.

"Oh, well! Let Kaigorodov wait," said Mike, and we moved north toward Russia.

I shall never forget the first night when we entered that country which had become even more dangerous to an outsider than notorious Tibet. Peril lurked on all sides. We expected to run into a trap any minute. Cleverly, the Red outposts would not touch us. They would immediately report to their headquarters, and we would be noiselessly surrounded and our retreat cut off. Besides, there might be a traitor among our ten new friends.

At last we saw the lights of the village, and dismounted. Rifles were loaded and bayonets fixed. We left a guard of three men in the bushes with our horses, binding their noses with ropes so that they would not neigh, and then we separated into two files and moved by different routes, surrounding the village.

"Good-bye, Dmitri," I heard a whisper from my neighbour whom I could not see.

"Good-bye to you, too," I answered in an undertone.

Suddenly our leader appeared. In a rage he whispered into my ear: "If I hear another word from you, I'll chop your head off."

Stealthily we entered the settlement, and began inspecting the huts by looking through the low windows. Most of them were occupied by peaceful peasants who were busying themselves with handicrafts, while their women either embroidered or were turning big spinning wheels. They looked kind and thoughtful.

In one hut I saw an old grandmother telling fairy tales to a group of children. The children's beautiful faces were attentive and their expressions reflected each change of emotion. The feeling of being an outlaw in my own country made me sick.

In a few huts we found groups of Red soldiers. Here we climbed over the fences and burst the doors open with our rifle butts. Then we slaughtered the unarmed and defenceless men with our bayonets. We took with us their ammunition and uniforms, leaving the dead men naked.

Plunging the peaceful village into terror and panic, we dashed back into the mountains, pausing first to hang the Red leaders at the village gates.

Thus we began the great game of "hit and run" with human lives as prizes. We certainly made life miserable for the small groups of Communists spread along the border. They were never sure of our position or when we would strike again. Usually we made a forced march of some hundred miles after each successful attack, and we never visited the same place twice.

Finally the Reds became tired of the "nuisance" as a man soon tires of a fly which jumps from his nose to his ear and then to his forehead, buzzing intrusively all the time, so they decided to exterminate us. They formed a flying detachment of sharpshooters and sent them after us. It was now our turn to be miserable.

We exchanged several skirmishes, always avoiding a decisive battle, which we were sure to lose. Finally, manœuvring back and forth through the country, we found ourselves cut off from Mongolia. The situation became serious, especially as we had reached high mountain ridges culminating in the notorious Munko Sardyk, impassable during winter. We were up against a wall.

Farther north there was a canyon, on the bottom of which lay the frozen Oka River, a tributary of the Irkut. Mountains rose steep and high on both sides of the river, and through the middle of the western slope a narrow path was beaten by the Soyots, a Mongolian tribe. Travelling six days by this narrow and dangerous path, one could reach Uriankhai. The place was so wild and impregnable that the Communists never attempted to subjugate the region.

Here we found refuge. However, we soon discovered that the Reds had no intention of dropping the affair and letting us escape again. They entered

the path too. We made seventy-five miles the first day, leaving the Reds far behind. We found a favourable spot and with difficulty climbed the mountains. With feverish speed and energy, not stopping for rest or even for meals, we cut many logs and piled these, as well as huge rocks, along the edge of the cliff. A few of our men were established behind an ambush on the very path, and several others were stationed two miles back and above the trail. Then we waited.

By noon of the next day the Reds appeared on the path below. They rode in a long single file and apparently did not suspect anything. Suddenly our men in front opened with a machine gun along the path. While many killed and wounded were falling down the canyon, the rest of the enemy stopped in confusion. They tried to turn back, but were met by another machine gun in the rear. Then we pushed down the logs and rocks from the cliff on them. With deafening uproar the load rolled down, smashing everything on its way. Men and horses began jumping from the trail down to the river, but none could land safely from that high cliff. In a quarter of an hour the tragedy ended and we shot the survivors when we descended the upper wall.

The victory, however, depressed us terribly and we decided to move to Altai immediately, where we would join Colonel Kaigorodov's forces. The cries of horror and agony of our enemy haunted us for many nights, and we never mentioned the battle when we talked.

We crossed into Mongolia at Mundi, and by sunset reached Hanga. The settlements face each other, one being on Russian soil and the other on Mongolian, some fifteen miles separating them. The Buriats reported to us that a Red scouting party, masquerading as refugees, stopped at Hanga the day before. Five of our men were dispatched to investigate. I was placed in charge of that small group.

We decided to play their game, and pretend to be refugees also. Hanga was deserted. On our previous trip north to Russia a few months ago we massacred the Chinese population. Old Russian colonists had migrated south to be farther away from the Communists, and the Mongols had moved to well-protected Bulgan Tal.

Smoke from a chimney of one of the smaller houses indicated the presence of inhabitants. Apparently they were new-comers, for we did not hear the barking of a dog behind the high fence as we approached the place. We looked through a hole in the fence and saw two horses standing in the yard. A man in shabby, torn clothing was carrying firewood towards the hut. By his sad and worn look I could judge that he was not happy. His face and hands were frost-bitten, and his boots needed repairing. He certainly looked like a refugee. We knocked at the thick wooden gate. The man dropped the wood and stood still, as though paralysed with terror. After a moment he found strength enough to call to his friends inside :

"Hey, somebody there." His voice was hoarse and unnatural. Four men ran out into the yard armed with one rifle, one revolver, a sabre and one hand grenade. Miserable equipment, indeed.

"Open the gate," I shouted. "We are White Cossacks."

But they did not believe us. However, they agreed that one of us should climb over the fence for a "conversation," so I climbed over the sharp and treacherous rough logs.

"So you are Whites, eh ?" said one of the wretches. "Then show me your cross."

I opened my collar and pulled out my golden cross which hung on a chain round my neck. Then I demanded the same from the other leader. He, too, had a cross. Suddenly another man behind him exclaimed in great excitement :

"Dmitri! How on earth? Oh, I can hardly believe my eyes."

He embraced me warmly and kissed me three times on the cheeks. It took me some time to realize that he was my college friend, Victor, my comrade in the war. He dragged me toward the hut where I saw a woman in a dirty military uniform. She was Mariana, his charming wife. When war was declared, she secretly followed her husband and appeared at our battery as his orderly. Nothing could persuade her to return to civilian life and so she stayed with Victor during the whole war and the revolution, and now she was with him in Mongolia.

She extended her hands toward me with a kind smile and exclaimed:

"God bless your heart, Dmitri. Please give me a piece of soap."

We all laughed, and then entered into a conversation where questions and answers were fired back and forth. I forgot about my five men outside the gate, and recalled them only when the door of the hut suddenly burst open and my men entered with rifles ready to shoot. They commanded:

"Hands up, you dirty rats. What have you done to our man?"

Then they saw me. The change in their expression was so sudden and so comical that we all burst into loud laughter. We went outside and lifted the white, blue and red flag on a pole. We saw the rest of our party emerging from the forest and galloping toward the huts.

The reunion was very gay. As we had lost ten men during our skirmishes, the acquisition of five new ones was welcome. It is true that some of our men were doubtful about "that woman," but what could be done about it?

"Oh, let her cook our meals," we resolved. Mariana had a small pie all ready, just to demonstrate her

abilities. The pie went round as a sample, and we were allowed to inhale the appetizing smell until suddenly one of the Cossacks swallowed it. As a penalty, he was assigned to be cook's helper.

Mike ordered an immediate march "just in order to be on the safe side." The new men received good warm clothing and all were armed with rifles. They could not hide their overwhelming happiness. I gave Mariana my sturdy white pony. She was appointed chief of supplies and the kitchen. Two Cossacks were attached to her as helpers and bodyguards.

Supper was promised after crossing Lake Koso Gol, fifteen or twenty miles west. We reached it in about three hours and started to cross the slippery ice. Ten more miles and we would be on the other side where a good meal and a good night's rest would be welcome after a long and eventful day.

As we neared the middle of the lake we heard a terrifying cracking of the ice. It sounded like the deafening shot of artillery. Koso Gol is subject to earthquakes and this was another shock. Behind us the ice opened and the water came out in waves over the surface. We rushed forward. Several horses fell, so we all dismounted. The cold water burned our feet like hot irons. We ran as fast as we could, and in half an hour's time were again on dry ice. The men in the rear reported that three of our boys had been caught and carried under the ice.

An hour later we had crossed the lake and made a big fire. Two long rows of logs were placed thirty feet apart and men and horses got between the two blazing fires. By the time supper was ready we were dry again. The animals were pastured and we started the delicious meal prepared by "our own woman." Mariana was as happy as a child to see us enjoy her stew with such voracious appetites.

We sang our evening prayers in a chorus and were about to retire when we heard cavalry galloping in

our direction. We dashed to our rifles and spread in a line about our camp. Soon we were surrounded by several hundred riders, whom we could hardly see in the darkness.

As we were revealed by our fire and they were hidden by the night, we were at their mercy. Moreover, our horses had apparently been captured. We lay down behind our saddle-bags and waited for the battle to start. Mike ordered us to be ready to dash through an opening in the enemy circle as soon as we might discover one. Dead silence descended over the valley. A few of our daring Cossacks were desperately trying to extinguish the fire.

Soon we noticed a stout Mongol advancing. He was very broad, with a huge head set on a short neck. The bronze of his face shone like metal in the red light of our fires. His squinted eyes were both rapacious and malignant. He was dressed in Oriental splendour and his manners were stately and impressive. He was unarmed, but carried a wicked Mongolian whip in his right hand. About fifteen feet from us he stopped, and with a strong accent spoke slowly in Russian, as though measuring his words. Immediately we felt that he was a man of action, but not of words.

"I am Prince Dugor Merin, a minister of mobilization for his Excellency, Baron von Ungern-Sternberg. Welcome to you, Mike, and to all your men."

In deep silence we watched our leader exchange his pipes with the Mongol. Tents soon rose here and there around us in the valley. A huge white tent was erected close to us, and Dugor Merin invited us all to move there.

"You do not need to worry about your horses or yourselves, as my men will guard the camp," he said laconically, and upon wishing us good night, he left for his camp a short distance away on the slope of a low hill commanding the valley and ourselves.

PART V

IN THE SERVICE OF BARON VON UNGERN- STERNBERG

I

WE spent a bad night. We knew we could fight our way through the Dugor Merin guards during the night, but escape would be just a temporary one. We were twenty-two, while he had three hundred and fifty good horsemen. He could outrun us and stop us easily. We might be experienced fighters and we might be brave, but the outcome of such unequal combat would be the same as what had happened to the Rujansky detachment, who attempted to escape the baron: they were surrounded and starved to death. Those who tried to cut through were shot from behind the rocks by Mongolian sharpshooters.

Before we could do anything we needed the horses. It would be impossible to bring them to the tent unnoticed, and we would be defeated even before we could start to fight. Of course, we could leave the horses and start on those fifty miles which separated us from Russia during the night, but we would not gain anything thereby. We were known in Russia, and the Communists would never forgive us the Oka massacre.

On the other hand, the south was impregnable too. To cross fifteen hundred miles of the Gobi Desert, especially during the winter, was madness. The east was infested by the baron's men, and the west was now blocked by Dugor Merin.

We were sitting silently around the fire in complete

perplexity. The hopelessness of the situation angered us. We refused to admit our defeat. To be outwitted by a Mongol was especially disgusting. But what could we do?

Mike, in his half-sarcastic, half-humorous fashion, was the first to come to his senses. In a broken baritone he sang a verse from a well-known fisherman's song in Russia :

"Swim, my little boat
At the waves' care . . ."

And then he added convincingly : "Cats have seven lives, but we live only once. Are we not Cossacks? Are we afraid of new adventures and bloodshed? Is not war our only occupation? Let come what may, God is above all. Go to sleep, brothers. The morrow will take care of itself."

In the morning Dugor Merin sent us a big pot of hot mutton and several dambas of Mongolian tea-soup. He wished us peace, health and prosperity.

Dugor Merin was one of the new leaders of free Mongolia. He believed in the Great Middle Asiatic Empire, to be formed by the baron out of Mongolia, Manchuria and Transbaikalia. Had this not been the original domain of Genghis Khan? He felt strongly that his people were entitled to that territory. He needed a good army and thought that we, Russian officers, might be of great value to him as instructors. Hence his hospitality.

Perhaps, besides his material interests, he liked us personally, as we were of his own stock : daredevils and cut-throats, afraid of nothing, and playing with life as gamblers play with their fortunes. We never spoke about the death of our friends in battles. They were losers, poor devils ; they were washed out, and gone from life and from our memory. Our turn would come too, but this probability of death added just so

much more to the excitement of fighting for life. We fought not because we loved life, but for the fun of cheating death.

After breakfast Mike, with me as his adjutant, was invited to Dugor Merin's yurt, in order to receive the baron's instructions. The chieftain's tent was large and spotlessly clean. It was made of fresh felt, and thick woollen carpets covered the floor. An excellent bronze image of Buddha was stationed on a high red trunk, with eight gold oil-lamps. Dugor Merin sat on a yellow cushion. His excellent sabre, a rifle richly inlaid with silver, and a whip were on the carpet before the altar. His right elbow rested on a magnificent saddle, and in his left hand he held an unusually well-carved prayer wheel. Some mysterious object in a shiny black lacquer case, about six feet long and three inches wide, was on his knees.

As we entered, Dugor Merin looked at us with a hidden smile. Like a flash, a sly and mischievous spark lit his narrow eyes, as he extended his elaborate greetings. We commenced the ceremony of exchanging pipes, and the Mongol offered us tea with dried-milk cakes and some cheese. After a while, which was intended to be long enough to arouse our curiosity more than alarm, he commenced to speak slowly into empty space, not paying the slightest attention to us.

He praised Mike for his wisdom in deciding "to follow the current" and also for his wisdom in abandoning any attempt to reach Kaigorodov. Apparently he knew our discussions of the night before, and now he enjoyed catching us unprepared. Indeed, we could not find a reply, and therefore we awaited his next move.

"Do not feel disappointed, as you will join him eventually," he said, smiling wickedly. "I am on my way to visit him too. No doubt, I will bring him back with me to his Excellency, the baron."

Dugor Merin was very polite, but there was a shade of cunning in his speech and in his attitude. He knew

we were at his mercy, but he was clever enough not to rub it in.

Mike asked the Mongol to give his compliments to our mutual friend, Kaigorodov. However, he thought that the Chieftain Dugor Merin might never return. With these words, he looked steadily into the Mongol's face in order to impress him with the inner meaning of what he had said, and as soon as he saw the temper of the Mongol rise, he added innocently :

"Altai is a beautiful country, and you may like it. Moreover, Kaigorodov will provide you and your men with all the comforts, as he has a very, very large army of his own."

Mike looked at me significantly, and I nodded my head and added :

"Of course, it would be hard for Kaigorodov to find additional pastures for his Honour, Prince Dugor Merin, as his army is too large, but his neighbour and personal friend, General Bakich, probably could help. You know, of course, that he has such a large territory in the west that even his five thousand men are hardly noticeable in those prairies. Your Honour will find him in Chiguchack. Farther west, Annenkov and his twenty-five hundred Orenburg Cossacks are stationed in Turkestan. I do not think that Chieftain Dugor Merin will have any trouble with those gentlemen."

Dugor Merin understood the challenge. He began turning his prayer wheel rapidly, and we saw that he was angry. He thought we were just liars, but later he probably recalled what we said, for he barely escaped alive from Kaigorodov's onslaught. With just a few of his bodyguards, he finally reached the baron. Colonel Kaigorodov, General Bakich, and Atamon Annenkov never came under the colours of the "mad baron."

Presently a man entered the yurt and reported something to Dugor Merin. He gave a sharp order and the man disappeared. Turning to us, the chief-

tain apologized for having to attend to the small business of punishing one of his riders for injuring his horse.

"You stay," he added obligingly. "It will take only a minute." We understood that this was going to be an illustration of his power over his men.

The door of the yurt was unfolded by an unseen hand and we saw a small group of men outside. Dugor Merin remained leisurely sitting on his cushion. The same man who previously reported to him crawled again on his knees into the yurt, with his hands extended to receive something. As he reached Dugor Merin, the latter solemnly placed the black lacquer case in his hands, and the man crawled backward toward the entrance. Here he sat on the ground, opened the case and began slowly to unwrap the object. It had several silk coverings of blue, red and yellow. Finally a bamboo plank appeared. It was brightly polished, like some sacred article. The bamboo was cut so that a hollow furrow remained along the inner side of the plank. The executioner rose to his feet and stepped outside where the unfortunate rider was stretched flat on the ground with his back bared. A man was sitting on his neck and another on his legs. The executioner slowly rolled up his sleeves and lifted the bamboo. He awaited his chief-tain's order.

"One," said Dugor Merin, and the bamboo fell on the body. Blood spurted from under it. The executioner raised the bamboo again, and again awaited the order.

"Two . . . three . . . four . . . five . . . enough."

Not a sound was heard. Only the voice of Dugor Merin and the hissing strokes of the bamboo broke the deadly silence. The door of the yurt was closed again and the executioner crawled in. He washed the bamboo and polished it carefully with the gown of the victim, then began slowly to wrap the plank

first in the yellow, then in the red and finally in the blue silk. The black case was closed, and the executioner, on his knees, carried it back to Dugor Merin. Then he crawled backward and performed a prayer, after which he disappeared from the tent.

Dugor Merin expected us to be petrified. However, he was much surprised when Mike said :

" You should have powdered the bloody muscles of the wretch with salt. You certainly are soft with your men."

" My men are all along the road," said Dugor Merin. " Every day they will supply you with fresh horses and food. Good-bye, and let peace be with you."

We left the Mongol in disgust. Immediately we saddled horses, and without regret rode eastward to Urga and the baron.

Mongolia is divided into urtons, or pony express stations, some twenty-five miles apart. A man on governmental business could obtain fresh horses here and leave his tired animals in good care. In urgent cases Mongols could gallop three hundred and fifty miles a day. Before going on such a trip, they would wrap themselves tightly in silk. This prevents a shaking of the internal organs which could easily result in death. They also wear little bells so that men at the stations are warned from a distance and have a new horse ready, which the rider mounts as soon as he reaches the station. The baron was famous throughout Mongolia for making such strenuous trips.

We always were envious of this convenient arrangement, and now found this service available to ourselves. Going in the prescribed direction, we soon approached the first urton. It consisted of a single empty yurt. Four cowboys were sitting inside around a small fire, smoking their pipes. There were no mats on the floor, and no household utensils whatever. Even the usual red box with the Buddha on it was

absent. The yurt was very old, full of holes, black from the smoke, and dreadfully dirty.

As soon as the Mongols saw us, they jumped on their ponies and disappeared. In a few minutes a good-sized drove of horses was galloping up. The cowboys offered us our pick of the broncos, and, indeed, we chose wonderful animals. They would hardly let us saddle them, so fresh and untamed were they. As we were very young, we took this opportunity of having a good ride. Like the wind, the wild horses carried us along the valley, and for the first time we enjoyed the ride. Let the horses get tired, what did we care? We would change them at the next urton. We changed horses three times and made over eighty miles before we got tired and decided to stop for the night. It was still early when Captain Ivanov declared he was leaving us and heading north into the Siberian mountains.

"Death is better than the baron," he added laconically. Our best and most powerful Cossack joined him. We all became solemn, looked respectfully at the two friends whose pride could not be purchased, even by the price of life itself. Mike spoke for us when he said :

"We understand. If you are caught, say that I have sent you to Hanga for forgotten supplies. Therefore, for God's sake, demand horses at the urtons and be mean to Mongols and act independent. Only boldness can save you through Mongolia now. As far as we are concerned, we will take a chance with the baron."

We gave the men four good horses and plenty of ammunition. Without showing our emotions, and with a simple good-bye we watched the two men ride off and disappear over the mountain ridge into the north. I later heard that Ivanov formed his own detachment in Uriankhai, and moved into the Ural Mountains at the border of European Russia.

We were now twenty men and one woman, and we solemnly swore to stand by each other under any circumstances "until death do us part." Deep in conversation, we did not notice the passage of time until we had reached Khathyl, with its hospitable friend of all Russian refugees, Dr. Guy. However, we found his mansion-fortress empty. The old watchman, a Mongolian, told us that the noyon was mobilized and left the place three days ago with his wife and little daughter, for Bangai Kure, where the notorious Colonel Kazagrandi was organizing his troops. Dr. Guy was very rich and Kazagrandi dreadfully poor, and that made a bad combination. We decided to change our route so that we would pass through Bangai Kure to see whether our friend was all right. We never saw him again.

We stayed at Khathyl several days. Since we were mobilized, initiative slipped from us and we lost all interest in direction and time. It made no difference to us where we were, so long as we could invent an excuse for delay. We wanted badly to wash ourselves and our clothing, and to rest. Up in the mountains we had washed with snow and dried ourselves at the fire. For several months now we had not undressed, always sleeping in readiness to fight the enemy. One can easily imagine the result.

Now we made good use of the bathhouse and laundry tubs. A few days later it would be Christmas, which we decided to celebrate in a decent atmosphere before we should be absorbed by the "butcher's" army of the baron.

Our celebration was modest, but it was carried on in high spirits. We had a little spruce tree decorated with coloured ribbons from our torn clothing, and with a chain of bright cartridges hanging in the limbs. The tree was powdered with shiny salt and white sheep wool was placed at the base. To tell the truth, we had forgotten many of the hymns, still those we

remembered we sang solemnly and to the best of our ability. Then twenty of us sat round the table for a feast. We had venison, Mongolian brandy, and a huge vatrushka, or Russian cheese cake, which Mariana prepared for us as a surprise. We also had pelmeni, or Siberian ravioli, and shashlik, consisting of small pieces of broiled mutton. As dessert, each was given a small piece of real bread, a delicacy we greatly appreciated. It was a masterly stroke of our dear Mariana, which capped the whole affair. Cheese cake was all right, but bread was a treat.

After supper the actors, singers and dancers were called upon for a performance. Volunteers formed an orchestra, consisting of several hair combs with pieces of paper placed across them, a drum made from an empty barrel, and a line of empty glasses filled with different quantities of water, and empty frying pans acting as cymbals. The laughter and gaiety lasted late into the night. At midnight I left the company for my two hours of duty as guard at one of our outposts.

As I was standing alone in the night, suddenly I noticed a movement in the distance, as if a tree had moved. I could not believe my eyes, and began carefully to observe the surroundings. Another shadow on my left was moving too. At my right I saw the dark silhouette of a horseman standing still.

"Hoo, hoo," I hooted like an owl, giving our alarm signal. The lights in the house immediately died out and armed men one after another emerged from the dark door in a silent chain. They took positions round the fence while Mike rushed to me for an explanation. We spoke in a whisper, as we observed the dark horsemen at the edge of the forest. They stood still, and so did we.

Hours passed in expectation of an attack, but nothing happened. We knew that the Bolsheviks or Chinese would attack. Who then were these men who were just keeping watch over us in such a peculiar

way? We decided to break through their ring by daybreak, whoever they might be. The night dragged on slowly, and we almost froze to death. In order to keep us warm, Mariana served hot tea several times. To our great surprise and disappointment, the enemy disappeared with the first light of dawn. We saddled our horses, and after a good breakfast left the fortress and rode down the valley. High on the very summits of the mountains, the unknown riders followed us. Two of them fell and rolled down after several of our shots, but the rest of them did not reply; they simply disappeared over the ridge.

In the evening the dark silhouettes of the horsemen again appeared on the horizon. We slept that night without a comforting fire, the food being prepared several hundred feet from the main camp.

This exhausting game continued for several days. Now we slept from daybreak until noon, and rode the rest of the day. We had to admit that the Oriental tactics of Dugor Merin were cleverly played, for the men following us must have been his, but we decided not to let them break us. Therefore, we moved slowly, taking good care of our food and our sleep. Occasionally we would kill one or two of these men, but they never replied to the fire. Two days before we reached Bangai Kure, Dugor Merin's watchdogs left us in peace.

The incident had tired us badly. We would have liked to fight the Mongols, and to be through with the affair once and for all. But to live seven days in constant expectation of being surrounded or cut off in treacherous mountain passes; to stay awake nights and to sleep in readiness during day; to go on small food rations; and in general to be without any rest whatsoever was a very unpleasant experience.

We arrived at Bangai Kure at noon. The settlement was full of Russian soldiers, proudly wearing

Imperial insignia on their shoulders. Most of them were dressed in long Mongolian coats of navy blue, white papahas and high Buriat riding boots. They all were impressed with their importance. We drove to headquarters. It was in one of the numerous Chinese trading fortresses. As we approached the high fence, we saw a man sitting in an uncomfortable position on the top of some rough logs of which the fence was built. Our guide told us that the man had been sitting there for several days as a penalty for some fault.

"Usually the legs become torn badly after several hours of such sitting," he added with a smile. "Food and drinks are given him on a long pole and he must sleep there too. So watch your step, boys."

We passed the gates at which two guards were stationed and entered the yard. It was filled with a variety of different vehicles, mostly native. In the reception hall an adjutant of Colonel Kazagrandi's was drinking tea out of a saucepan. No doubt he had been promoted recently from a corporal. The man gave us a casual glance, and without asking any questions, went inside to report our arrival.

After a few minutes of silence, we suddenly heard the loud and abusive voice of Kazagrandi swearing like a bargee. The adjutant came out and closed the door behind him, then said in a bored tone :

"As I knew in advance, the colonel says you can all go to hell. Now go and find a place for yourselves in some of the barracks in the street. You may be thrown out a couple of times, but that does not matter, you will find a place to sleep."

"What have we done to be treated like this?" I asked the adjutant.

"What's your name, mister?" he asked me with a funny smile. I stated my name, he wrote it down, and then said abruptly: "Good-bye for the present."

We found a place in one of the half-empty barracks.

A dirty crowd of men dressed in rich Chinese silks were eating lunch with their knives from pots and pans. The meal consisted of an assortment of delicacies prepared and served by local Chinese merchants, who looked pale and worn, and terrorized in the extreme.

We were immediately served with a huge pot of Chinese ravioli under the cheers and jokes of our new companions. However, they were too preoccupied exchanging their impressions of an amusing execution of yesterday to pay much attention to us.

A woman who refused to be driven into military servitude by Kazagrandi was accused of being Red. She was arrested with her daughter of ten and her son of seven years. All of them were dragged outside of Bangai Kure to the dumping grounds. The woman was executed first. A Russian Imperial army captain was the executioner.

He drew his sabre and swung it at the woman's head but missed the mark, and cut off her arm instead. The blood gushed forward and immediately dyed her dress crimson. The frightened children tried desperately to come to the rescue of their mother: "Mother . . . mother, what are they doing?" they cried in horror. Meanwhile, the captain continued his exercise with the sword. "Sissy, he couldn't kill her if he tried," exclaimed somebody in the crowd, and the rest of the men in the barrack laughed loudly. They said that the captain was a nervous wreck when he finally finished the woman. He could not do anything with the children, and his friends came to his rescue and chopped their heads open.

The story was so funny that the crowd did not want to drop the subject. More and more details were recalled to the amusement of those present.

"Oh, those eyes, those baby-boy's eyes," muttered somebody in the corner on one of the large community beds. The crowd giggled, whistled and guffawed.

A cold shiver ran along my back as I listened to this "funny" story. "So these are the forces of liberation," I thought hopelessly.

After the meal we were free to go wherever we desired. Kazagrandi's army of five hundred men had just returned from a wholesale robbery of Gegen Kure, the third largest city in Mongolia, some three hundred and fifty miles south-east. Now the men were recuperating. I took this opportunity and went to see Mr. Zimin, a friend of mine when I was a teacher at Bangai Kure the preceding autumn. He was a graduate from the University of Vladivostok, where I took courses in consular subjects. Later he became a consul here in Mongolia, but since the Russian revolution he had taken to cattle raising. He proved successful in a short time, but still could not afford to build a house like those occupied by the rest of the business men. Instead, he purchased a large yurt from Daichin Wan, a local Mongolian prince. It was placed in a large yard, surrounded by the usual high log fence. Here he lived with his wife and two young daughters.

Zimin was an interesting character. Well read and well travelled, he possessed the rare gift of relating his experiences in a most interesting manner. He was an aristocrat by inclination, but democratic in practical everyday life. He furnished his yurt with good European furniture and carpets, but he preferred to sleep on a huge black bear skin on the floor. His excellent briar pipe, his crisp short-cut moustache and his piercing friendly eyes under thick bushy eyebrows were something hard to forget.

"Oh, hello, my dear Dmitri Grigorievich," he exclaimed when he saw me at the door. "Wife, give us some brandy and appetizers."

Two little girls came to my side, and after a while succeeded in squeezing their own sentences among our questions and answers.

"Dmitri Grigorievich, will you paint us another

picture as you did last year ? ” and they looked at me with most pleading eyes.

“ Of course, my little ladies. Give me a piece of paper.”

After our personal experiences were related, the political situation became the topic. Zimin told me that none of the old Russian colonists believed in the baron. “ But the devil certainly forces all of us to keep still. Kazagrandi just hanged our priest, who dared to express his doubts.

“ Was Dr. Guy here ? ” I asked.

“ He was, but no more,” answered my friend and shook his head gravely. In a half whisper, so that his children would not hear, he related a horrible story of the murder of the generous and noble person who had helped all Russian refugees in Mongolia, Kazagrandi included.

“ You know, he was a rich man,” began Zimin. “ In addition to his current cash he liquidated his property at Khathyl, and brought with him two wagons of silver when he came here. All of it he gave to the formation of a new army against the Communists in Russia. That silver was later exchanged into gold and sewed carefully by Kazagrandi into his belt, which he never takes off. But the story is this : Dr. Guy was appointed agent to Khathyl, but his route was so planned that he could not go with his wife and little daughter. They were sent by a short route separately, under the escort of a few Cossacks. An officer who went with Guy shot him in the back as soon as they left Bangai Kure, but the Cossacks had a hard time with his wife. She whipped the horses into a gallop and opened fire with her little Browning revolver. The horses stampeded and ran wild over the rough Mongolian roads and soon overturned the carriage. The wounded woman gathered her last strength and shot her baby through the head before she died.”

We did not speak any more that night, but simply

drank our brandy and ate the appetizers, until Zimin fell asleep. I then went to the barracks. Everybody was asleep already, and the stench of dirty boots, fur coats and unwashed human bodies hung heavily in the air. A man on duty reported to me with a hideous smile that I was wanted at once at the commandant's office. As I was leaving, he hesitantly touched my leather jacket and said :

"Give it to me." I looked at him in surprise, not knowing what he meant, but he obligingly made himself clear when he added, "You will not need it any more, you know," and smiled again his evil smile.

I understood, and immediately became sober. "So this is my turn to be massacred at the dumping grounds," I thought as I went out.

When I reached a dark street, I tore the inner lining of my coat, where I kept some strychnine, a good old poison which helped us many times to kill the wolves who attacked our horses at night. I spit into my hand and made a paste of the poison, which I placed under my fingernails. I also hid a piece in my hair. After this was done, I went to see the commandant.

"The commandant is alone right in that house," the soldier at the gate told me. Another soldier was guarding the house.

Upon entering, I saw a man sitting at an empty table with both hands deeply hidden in his thick black hair. A bottle of brandy was in front of him. The dim light of a candle inserted into an empty bottle threw a huge black shadow on the wall. He was staring down at the table with an insane intensity, and my immediate impression was one of uncontrolled power and brute strength.

"Well?" he growled savagely, not changing his posture when he heard my step.

"Captain Alioshin has the honour of reporting to you, sir," I said in a formal military manner.

"When do you want to die? To-day or to-morrow?"

I am rather tired to-night," he asked, not bothering to look up.

"I do not want to die, sir."

"Don't be stupid! Don't you know why they sent you?" he asked, looking up at me with the glassy eyes of a snake.

After a few minutes, which seemed like ages, he suddenly leaned back in his chair, poured a glass of brandy down his throat with a few noisy gulps, spat on the floor, and asked:

"I say, haven't we met before? Somewhere in another life, some former life, perhaps when we were just kids or something? Who the hell are you, anyway?"

As I was telling him who I was and where I had served in the army, I suddenly recalled him as a dreadfully lazy fellow who used to copy my homework at the high school of commerce at Harbin some years ago. Five years of military service had passed since then, and we had changed considerably. We began smiling, then laughing. After having had a few drinks together, Filka, now the commandant, grabbed at my hand, and examining it intently, exclaimed:

"Strychnine! I'll be a son of a gun!" His face became pale and his eyes large and terrifying. He plunged my fingers, one after another, into a glass of brandy and cleansed them of the poison.

"Dmitri, I must kill you somehow," he said in a whisper. "Listen! I have a plan. Here are the papers of some fellow named Poto. Take them and forget that you have ever been Alioshin. I'll give Poto a pass, and you must gallop to Urga immediately, to be there within the next twenty-four hours, where you are to present yourself at the baron's headquarters as Poto. From then on it is up to you to get along with the baron. My advice to you is to keep your mouth shut. No remarks, understand?"

With an apology, Filka took me by the collar and

rudely dragged me to the door, which he kicked open with his boot, and we entered the yard. He began swearing loudly as he pushed me before him, his six-shooter ready in his hand.

"Need any help, chief?" asked the guard.

"No," answered Filka roughly. "I can finish him myself."

In the dark street Filka released his powerful grip and apologized. We slipped into the narrow passages of the Mongolian district, and soon stopped before a gate. Filka knocked several times with the butt of his revolver. Suddenly the gate opened and we entered.

In the dim light I could distinguish a monk with a flat face and close-shaved head. Filka asked him to prepare me for the trip, and I followed him into his yurt.

He brought several large pieces of silk, some ten feet long, and bound me tight. He forbade me to eat anything during the trip. He then saddled a horse and lifted me carefully into the saddle. Filka opened the back gate and I saw before me a dark open valley.

The horse began prancing. I bent low to the saddle and released the reins, and we dashed forth at a gallop.

2

After galloping at breakneck speed for thirty miles I had to be carried from the saddle. I was placed in many other saddles that day, as I galloped bent over and only half-conscious from station to station. The cold was quite severe, but the wind was worse. I wrapped my face in a scarf, so that only a narrow opening was left for my eyes, and even then I could hardly keep them open. The pain in my stomach grew more and more intense. It seemed the whole world was in a whirlwind, and I felt dizzy. Seasickness

developed and I began to vomit. Later blood commenced to flow from my nose. My bells told the story to the station masters, and they acted without asking questions. I noticed that they began to tie me to the saddle so that I would not fall off on the way. They performed their work as if it were nothing extraordinary, but just another job to be done.

Late in the evening I arrived at the camp of the baron on the banks of the Kerulen River. I do not remember any details of my arrival. I recall only that I was awakened in a tent by a wild cry. There was so much terror, pain and protest in that cry that I sat on the floor, on which I had slept, and asked in horror of several men sitting around the fire what it might have been.

"Oh, that's nothing. Just another mobilized brat being questioned. He lost consciousness from the bamboo, and now they have placed him in the fire so that he will recover."

With wildly-staring eyes I looked into the darkness and listened to the man growling and moaning, half choked with the smoke. Then the hissing and splashing of the bamboo whip was heard again. I covered my ears and, bending over my bags, began silently crying, with tears that burned me through. In order that the people in the yurt would not hear me, I bit my lips until they bled. Darkness surrounded me, and again I fell into a deep sleep, utterly exhausted.

I woke up late the next day. Near me were five men having their lunch. They looked awful; unshaved and dirty, dressed in rags which had been Mongolian fur coats. They ate with their hands, helping themselves with vicious Mongolian knives. The baron himself was dirty, as I later learned, and naturally everyone emulated the "boss." One of the men noticed that I sat up, and asked:

"Who the hell is that fellow?"

"Oh, don't worry. They'll find out," answered another, and all began laughing as if it were a joke.

I felt that it would be better to speak, and therefore asked :

"Do you know where I can find the Teapot ? "

"The Teapot ? " all asked in a peculiar tone, as if the name were too familiar and unpleasant.

"Yes. I have a letter to him," I said, not suspecting anything. The men who had laughed at me suddenly became very obliging and offered me a bowl of their meal, and some tea and tobacco. They inquired how I felt, and whether they had disturbed me. I read a beastly fear in their faces and became even more uncomfortable.

Later I learned that the Teapot was the baron's personal adjutant. He was a huge and powerful animal. He was always present when the baron granted an interview to anyone. If the baron requested a "teapot," the latter would cautiously get behind the guest, suddenly grab him by the neck with his powerful hands, and strangle him to death.

Filka had given me a letter to this man. I now discovered that he was away from the camp with the baron, and I should have to wait a whole day until he returned. I made good use of the intervening time to familiarize myself with my new surroundings. They were bad. . . .

The baron's "army" consisted of several distinct units. Each of those divisions was treated separately and differently. Closest to his heart was the Chahar regiment, under the command of Bair Gür, a young and handsome Mongolian prince. This regiment received all the privileges, the best ammunition and equipment, and also the best food obtainable. The baron always kept the Chahars separate, and at night they were given a commanding position over the rest of the camp some one or two miles distant.

Strangely enough, this very regiment, when in

Transbaikalia, once rose in revolt, massacred all their Russian officers and deserted to Mongolia. Only half of them reached their homes in the Chahar province; the rest were killed by the Chinese at the very border. This happened at Maimaichen, just opposite Russian Kiakhta. The Chinese soldiers were too few to combat the whole Chahar regiment, so they invited them for a feast in commemoration of their gallant escape from the baron and his hated Cossacks. When the guests became intoxicated, the Chinese suddenly began a general slaughter. Out of some five hundred Chahars, three hundred were knifed to death, while the rest succeeded in escaping.

When the baron fled into Mongolia, he invited the Chahars, now professional highwaymen, to join him in his ventures. Knowing him only too well as a daring bandit, they willingly came under his banner.

Second in favour were the Buriats, whose commander, Captain Stepanov, had been recently executed for being late in bringing his men to a night bivouac. Captain Suharev took charge. The Buriats were paid one hundred seventy-five gold roubles as an initial subsidy at the time of the mobilization. The baron had his yurt situated in the midst of the Buriat horsemen.

The third in favour was the Tartar regiment, under command of General Riazuhin. The name means "the cutter," and the cutter of human throats he was, indeed. Riazuhin had been an intimate friend of the baron's since his early military career. He was very jealous of the baron's leadership, and later, when the baron's position became weakened, he deserted to save his own worthless life.

The Japanese detachment, under Colonel Hiro Yama, was next. These poor men were treated wretchedly, and their colonel finally deserted to the Chinese in Urga, who promptly hanged him.

The Russian regiments were in complete disgrace.

They were composed mostly of mobilized business people who had lived peacefully in Mongolia. What the baron dared not do to his Orientals he did readily to his own countrymen. It was here his terror was felt at its worst. The commandant's detachment, under Colonel Laurentz, represented the executioners, Colonel Sipailov being the inventive genius of the most outrageous murders. Of all, Ensign Burdukovsky was the gayest.

Then there were the Mongols, taken from the population. The composition of this regiment was always changing, as the Mongols deserted *en masse*, and new men had to be mobilized all the time.

At the very bottom of the baron's military caste were the former Russian military men. They were kept apart as pariahs, as a class of spiritual, moral and physical untouchables. Formerly, all had been officers of the Russian Imperial army. As they represented the class that had expelled the baron so shamefully from the army, and had forced him once more to run away into Mongolia, he now took the opportunity to display his bitter hatred toward them. The baron humiliated them to the rank of privates and placed them under the command of shabby, illiterate fellows, promoted from the rank and file into commanding positions. These men had their own accounts to settle with their former commanders, now in disgrace. The morale of the former officers was broken so badly that they did not even complain. Two pounds of meat and one-sixteenth pound of flour was their daily meal. Scurvy developed, and many left for the hospital until the chief physician, Dr. Klingenberg, began to complain of overworking his staff. He intimated to the baron that the sick might better be got rid of. So, with his permission, Klingenberg poisoned all the sick in his hospital. The result was that all who were unwell refrained from necessary medical treatment, preferring to die in peace in their yurts.

The former Russian officers were dressed in rags, with pieces of leather tied to the soles of their feet. Unshaven and dirty, cynical and cunningly cruel, they were lost to the world. Death was always welcome to them, and they fought like devils. Although utterly neglected, they were the cementing force that united the whole army. Without them the Mongolian adventure would have been a total impossibility, and the baron would have been just a soap bubble, as he later discovered, but too late to save himself.

Evening came, and hundreds of smoky fires were set up in the camp for cooking supper. Against the crimson sky the figures of the warriors became black and menacing. According to custom, the Orientals performed slowly their revolting operation of killing sheep. They would open the chest of the animal, plunge their hand inside, and tear out the pulsing heart with a terrible pull.

My companions in the yurt hotly discussed whether a freshly killed woman would have any sex appeal. They could not agree, and bets were made to try to prove their respective contentions at the next opportunity, which proved to be soon, as the baron had promised to give Urga up to three days' plundering, after it would be taken. No restrictions would be exercised and the mob would be free to act as they pleased. Men anticipated with pleasure the fun they would have in breaking into homes, having all the wines, food, money, jewels, silks and women they wanted.

Suddenly all became quiet in the camp and I heard a whisper that the Teapot was coming. All hid in the yurts and only the cooks remained by the fires. Soon I heard heavy steps, and a peculiar whistling sound. The man was not whistling any particular tune, but just one sharp note sounded through his firmly set teeth. My companions silently smoked their pipes, listening intently and watching the outside. They

looked grave and alarmed as we heard the steps nearing our yurt. Teapot stopped at our door, and with a terrific blow of his heavy foot, broke it open. All faces fearfully turned toward the entrance.

Teapot, Ensign Burdukovsky, was tall and of a powerful physique. He had a huge body with a high and broad chest, and the thick arms and legs of an elephant. A little curly blond head rested on his wide shoulders. Small, colourless eyes looked straight and without any expression whatever from under a narrow forehead. The small nose was almost lost on his flat face. His mouth was wide, still and stiff. He spoke through his teeth, and the words came from the corner of his fleshy lips, which quivered in contempt.

"Well!" he bellowed significantly. He looked around without turning his head. "Listen, you swine! Who are you hiding here? You'll get your reward of fifty bamboo later." He turned toward me and with a powerful jerk grabbed me by the collar and lifted me to his face. Without another word, he dragged me outside and, still holding me by the collar, walked along pulling me after him. I almost choked to death before I was able to tell him about the letter. He turned sharply to one of the numerous corrals and let me fall to the ground. Very cautiously and quickly, he glanced through the paper, his face not expressing any emotions. Finally he said:

"All right. It's powerfully unhealthy for you here. I'll hide you among our cowpunchers for the time being. Many of your calibre are sent there for an education, and therefore no one will pay attention to a new rat. Keep away from Djambolon, the headman over there."

With these few words he grabbed a horse from the corral, which had a halter on its head, and added sharply:

"Gallop four miles west, and you'll see the place."

Without further discussion, he turned back to the camp and soon disappeared among the dark tents.

Alone in the semi-darkness, I pulled my horse farther from the camp, and without saddle rode westward. The horse increased its speed as soon as it sensed the large herd of horses in the pastures. Soon we arrived and I stopped as directed, at the first smoky linen tent. Here I was to report to Mitka, an influential cowboy.

A half dozen unshaven creatures in dirty rags sat round the small fire inside. They took every precaution not to be seen as they indulged in a stolen meal. They had killed a newborn calf, the meat of which they had carried in their saddlebags during the day. They were not surprised at my arrival, but simply cleared a place at the fire and gave me a bowl of soup. No questions were asked, as questions were dangerous in this army.

Mitka was a slim and alert fellow, who did not impress me at all. He was one of the millions who entered the army during the war, whose education began and ended within the military barracks. Joyful obedience was his chief characteristic, not because he was clever, but because he was dull. His life belonged to his superiors, and only superiors existed in his limited world. A good soldier he must have been; stupid, but true as a watchdog. Outside the prescribed routine he was kind to his men.

My job was easy. Three days passed in the delightful task of watching cattle and horses, several thousands in all. The free life of the wild horses was especially enchanting. All had their individualities, sharply displayed at the most unexpected moments. They fought and they loved, and were clever at finding new spots which still held some of last year's dry grass. Within the herd were certain groups that always kept together, jealously biting any intruder. They respected only those cowboys who were fearless and strong, and despised the weaklings. These they kicked or bit, knowing well they could get away with anything with this type of person.

Among my fellows was my friend from Tora, formerly a governor of one of the Russian provinces. He related his story of how he had escaped from the Tunka district with his daughter and how, after many adventures, he finally reached the baron in high spirits and with many hopes. All that morning he busied himself preparing an elaborate lunch, and when it was ready he sent his daughter to invite the baron. He thought that in such a social way he would be able duly to present his qualifications, and the baron in return would assign him to a suitable position in his army. However, the baron took this as a certain form of bribery, and acted accordingly. The governor received fifty lashes, his property was confiscated, and his daughter was sent to work in the hospital laundry. Since then the governor had been kept among the sheep, cows and horses without any prospect of improving his condition. He was gravely concerned about his daughter, who was subjected to many amorous advances on the part of the hospital personnel. In order to safeguard herself to some degree, she made herself unkempt, dirty and ugly in appearance.

The month of January came to an end, and with it the news spread that we were to march against Urga soon. The baron chose the first of February for an attack, in accordance with the prognostications of the lamas. For the purpose of determining strategy and tactics, the baron consulted many famous Mongolian monks. His chief cowboy and his closest friend, Buriat Djambolon, was one of his most trusted advisers.

Djambolon had raised himself from an ordinary cowboy to the position of chief superintendent of cattle in Dauria. He was exacting in all details, of which there were many in such a business. After General Kazachihin, treasurer in the baron's army,

absconded with all the money, the baron entrusted Djambolon with keeping his personal funds, consisting of twenty pounds weight of gold in bullion. The baron believed that this was lost when he was forced to run from Dauria, but Djambolon delivered the gold safely to Mongolia, together with the baron's cattle. As a reward he was made an officer. When in Mongolia, Djambolon became indispensable in finding and getting in touch with the right people. In addition, he not only spoke the native language fluently, but he could read and write Mongolian. Naturally he received rapid promotions and finally became the baron's personal adviser.

Djambolon was well versed in fortune-telling too. The baron was utterly ignorant of military science ; he neglected his army ; he did not know how to select position or how to determine the right moment for an attack. His personal bravery was just a handicap to his subordinates, as he was always in the front line interfering with the details of the battle, with the result that co-ordination of all units was impossible. As an escape from his ignorance and hesitancy, the baron consulted fortune-tellers. Djambolon was the right man for this. Many sheep shoulders were dried in the ashes, and their elaborate cracks interpreted to determine where the troops must be stationed, and how to advance against the enemy.

Once the baron sent a spy to investigate conditions in Urga, and then killed him with a blow from his bamboo when the man returned with news that did not please his chief. In a rage, the baron himself galloped to Urga, beat a couple of Chinese soldiers at the enemy's outpost, found out what he wanted to know, and returned home safely the same night.

Conditions in Urga were unfavourable. The Chinese not only had a ten-to-one superiority in men, but they had a regular artillery force, as compared with the three guns the baron possessed. Besides, the Chinese

were behind fortifications, with several barbed-wire belts surrounding them. In addition to all this obvious military advantage, their soldiers slept in warm buildings during the cold winter nights, and had an unlimited supply of ammunition and food. Opposed to the Chinese, the baron had a band of cold, underfed and underclothed men, with a very limited supply of ammunition.

All men were called from all departments to reinforce the army. Mitka was left with the cattle, while the rest of us in high spirits joined the riders. The governor and I were assigned to the Tartar division under command of General Riazuhin.

I shall never forget the dreadful inspection to which we were subjected upon arriving at the recruiting station. The minutes seemed like ages, and we were all on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Here, for the first time, I saw the baron, and never regretted that I had not seen him before.

He was tall and slim, with the lean white face of an ascetic. His watery blue eyes were steady and piercing. He possessed a dangerous power of reading people's thoughts. A firm will and unshakable determination possessed those eyes to such an extent that they suggested ominous insanity. I felt a cold shiver run up my back when I saw them. He had unusually long hands and an abnormally small head resting on a pair of large shoulders. His broad forehead bore a terrible sword cut which pulsed with red veins. His white lips were closed tightly, and long blond whiskers hung in disorder over his narrow chin. One eye was a little above the other. He was dressed in a dirty papaha, a short Chinese silk jacket of a cherry-red colour, blue military breeches and high Buriat riding boots. In his right hand he held his famous bamboo whip; otherwise he was unarmed.

He made the inspection personally. He would stop at each man separately, look straight into his face, hold

that gaze for a few moments, and then bark: "To the army"; "Back to the cattle"; "Liquidate." All men with physical defects were shot until only the able-bodied remained. He killed all Jews, regardless of age, sex or ability. Hundreds of innocent people had been "liquidated" by the time the inspection was closed.

Half knight and half bandit by ancestry and his own habits, the baron lived a vivid life of uninterrupted and exciting adventures. Although still in his early thirties, he was already an old man in his beliefs and inclinations. Had he been born in the Middle Ages, no doubt he would have become a famous conqueror. In the twentieth century, however, he was out of place. His dream of creating a Middle Asiatic Empire, with powerful hordes of Asiatics under his command, did not belong to our era. His Buddhist teachers taught him about reincarnation, and he firmly believed that in killing the feeble people he only did them good, as they would be stronger beings in their next life. These teachings of the "superior man" made him relentless both toward himself and toward others. He was told that he himself was the reincarnated Tsagan Burkhan, or God of War, and in his unbalanced mind he became convinced that he was the world's salvation.

On January 22nd, by the old Gregorian calendar, we left the Kerulen River for Urga. According to the prophecy of a famous Khushikten lama from Breven Hit monastery, the attack must commence at the fifth day of the first moon, or February 1st, when the Living Buddha Bogdo Gegen Hutukhta would be liberated from the palace in Urga, where he was imprisoned by the Chinese.

Three months previous, the baron had made his first attempt to capture Urga. In the dark winter night the native guide led the Russian regiments to the Holy City, but quite unsuccessfully. The Russians suddenly

found themselves under the crossfire of strong Chinese forces. The baron retreated into the neighbouring hills, where he kept his army from October 26th to October 31st, awaiting another fortune-telling period. As the snowstorms raged all those days and nights, his army almost froze to death. The men reached the stage where they were ready to go into any battle, even against the devil himself. The baron led them against the Chinese fortifications again. In a fearful battle the Chinese were defeated and their ammunition and supplies were hastily loaded and moved toward the southern end of the city, ready to evacuate upon a minute's notice. The situation was saved, however, by one of their gallant young officers, who gathered a group of daredevils and led a successful charge against the Russians.

The Chinese were separated from their native land by several thousand miles of the dreadful Gobi Desert, impassable during winter. They realized this only too well, and therefore joined their heroes in the desperate onslaught. The baron ordered a retreat to Tirildja, where new forces of mobilized Russians began to arrive. There he reorganized his army and moved to the Kerulen River.

In his movements, Ungern directed his regiments to stop at various places in accordance with old Mongolian prophecies. To the simple nomads it all seemed miraculous, and they could only assume that the baron was really the reincarnated God of War, sent down to earth for a certain great mission. When he declared the holy war for the Yellow Faith, no doubts were left in the hearts of the Mongols. They joined him willingly and blindly.

Now, seventeen hundred desperate fighters who had nothing to lose slowly advanced through the wooded hills and snowy plains toward Urga to fight the last battle to the bitter end.

3

Two days and nights the men rode their hairy ponies until both riders and animals were exhausted. The plateau leading to Urga, which they had been crossing, is notorious for its winter storms. Even when the blizzards stopped, sharp wind still pierced them to the bone. The advance was slow and painful. Many times men got lost and whole divisions intermingled on account of the thick snowfall. Finally the baron announced a day of rest.

Even in the open the rest was welcome. Tents were immediately erected in a little cavity on the plain, and the camp was protected from without by a ring of our transport wagons. In the middle we placed our horses. We fed our animals and had a meal ourselves. Those who had some brandy made good use of it, but when they began singing all were put "on ice." These drunkards were supposed to sit on the river ice, eat raw meat, and chew the snow for drink. To make them even more miserable they were ordered to keep their individual fires burning on the shore, which they had to attend the whole night, returning each time to the ice. Those who dared to remain in the warmth of the fire longer than necessary were shot by camp guards. They had no sleep and no rest at all. About midnight they were attacked by hungry wolves, and there ensued a desperate battle between unarmed men and ravenous beasts. The camp awoke and rescued the survivors, whereupon the baron ordered their weapons to be returned to the victims on condition that they immediately leave the camp and march alone to Urga. Hungry and cold and without supplies the men were driven on by their fear of freezing to death, until we caught up to them late the next day.

It is remarkable what extreme hardships the human body can withstand. None of those drunkards died,

and none of them stopped drinking as a result of their lesson.

We marched three more days and by January 29th reached Ubulun with its ancient monastery, Dzun Kure. We were now within some thirty miles of our goal. Fires were forbidden, and even the Chahars were unmercifully beaten when they attempted to cook their meals. Their commander received most of the lashes, after which he was sent on foot to join the rest of the unfortunates encamped on the hills surrounding Urga.

Late in the night our outposts captured two automobiles loaded with Jewish refugees who were making a dash for their lives from Urga ; among them was a business man from Switzerland, by the name of Stefan. All were lynched with great gaiety, and their property went into the treasury of the " army."

The same night the commander of the Japanese detachment, Colonel Hiro Yama, ran away, but the baron got him by informing the Chinese that Hiro Yama had been sent to Urga as a Russian spy. Naturally, the colonel was executed.

Next day we were in the vicinity of Urga, and the army fortune-tellers found themselves very busy once more. Each regiment had its own lama proficient in reading the zigzags of the burned sheep shoulders. Some of the regiments called for additional services in the reading of cards, palms, crystals and moving saucepans. I was one of those mediums who possessed the mysterious power of telling the past, present and future. I preferred the saucepan, as the field was broader. You close your eyes, and through your eyelashes watch how the saucepan moves and points just exactly where you want it to point. I was so popular that other regiments borrowed me on occasion.

There was one man in the army who was utterly behind the times. That was Colonel Doobovick, who was crazy enough to prepare a detailed plan of the

future campaign. It was a great joke, as if our elaborate fortune-tellings were not sufficient, and we all laughed at him.

To save time, ammunition and trouble, the baron sent the Chinese an ultimatum to surrender, generously promising to enroll them in his army. In reply, the Chinese arrested all Russians in Urga and threw them into prison. Some hundred of Transbaikalian Cossacks were among those unfortunates. Furthermore, Russian gold mines, the rich branch of the All-Russian Co-operative, the consulate building, and the Russian cathedral were looted. The Living Buddha, the Russian sympathizer, was fined and paid a \$200,000 contribution to his hated enemies, the Chinese.

The gauntlet was dropped, and the challenge accepted. We prepared for battle. An unusual order was issued by the baron: to divide the army at night in groups of three men, which groups were to keep big fires burning in the hills around Urga. It must be admitted, the sight was magnificent. It created an impression that there were almost a hundred thousand Russians, while our army numbered only seventeen hundred men. The Chinese had twelve thousand. As we learned later, they sent a special messenger to Peking requesting reinforcements. Thus they anticipated encircling us and attacking simultaneously from the rear and the front, to destroy all the baron's men.

We were eager to enter the fight, as Urga promised all that we were lacking: food, clothing, ammunition, and dry warm places to sleep in. Besides, we had old accounts to settle with them for all the humiliation and suffering they had lavishly bestowed upon us the last autumn. We were to advance in three directions. Hobotov with his five hundred men would follow the Tola River straight against the

Chinese barracks, and engage the major portion of the enemy's forces ; General Riazuhin with his three hundred and fifty men would attack from the south, and block the Chinese retreat by the only caravan road leading to Kalgan ; Turbatov with two hundred and fifty men and sixty Tibetan warriors would climb to the holy mountain, Bogdo Ul, in the rear of the enemy with the special mission of liberating the Living Buddha from his palace, which was occupied by the Chinese. Our reserves consisted of two Mongolian regiments of Naiden Gun and two hundred Chahars. It was a good thing we kept them in the rear, as they ran in mad panic at the beginning of the battle.

The night of January 31 was very cold. Strong wind handicapped the army, so that we had to dismount. On foot we reached our positions at eleven o'clock. Here we wasted valuable time waiting for our artillery, which was delayed by the slow pace of the oxen. When at last they arrived at dawn, the Chinese discovered us and opened a fierce fire from their artillery and machine guns. The Chahars and Mongols left us in a panic. Thus our surprise attack ended in failure, and we lost our reserves. Each division had to rely on its own ingenuity now, as there was nobody to rescue anybody else, once the battle began.

Running in chain formation we got behind the enemy at Upper Maimaichen, a suburb of Urga. The Chinese were forced to retreat to their trenches at Lower Maimaichen. Meanwhile, Hobotov advanced on his sector also, capturing two pieces of artillery and two hundred rifles. Immediately he directed the captured Chinese battery against the Chinese. Both our group and Hobotov's fought desperately, in order to distract the enemy's attention from its rear, where Turbatov was to execute the major task for the day. According to Mongolian fortune-telling and learned

prophecies, the Living Buddha was supposed to be liberated from the Chinese on the first day of the battle, February 1, and we had to make that prophecy a reality at all costs. It was imperative to have the Buddha among us, for then, we expected, all Mongolia would back us to the limit of its resources. We were soon enough disillusioned, however.

Turbatov carried out his mission successfully, so that when he fell upon the Chinese at the palace they were taken by surprise. Bogdo Ul is a sacred mountain and only a few lamas ever entered its grounds. The Chinese never expected the Russian devils to appear from that direction, and they became easy prey for the Cossacks. While hand-to-hand fighting raged on the palace premises, the lamas led the Living God into the yard, where he was immediately surrounded by Tanguts from Tibet. As he was blind, two priests held him by either arm, helped him to mount a horse, and then all galloped away into the darkness. Over a thousand Chinese were killed there by Turbatov, who captured several machine-guns and plenty of ammunition, including valuable hand grenades. All this new equipment was used in the main fight at Urga.

Late in the morning we pressed upon the enemy so hard that they left their positions and retreated into the strong Bulun barracks, the Russian consulate building, and the formidable fortress of the Russian gold mine company. A group of some two thousand Chinese secretly deserted and fled to the north, intending to reach Red Russia and be interned by the Soviet. Now the complete victory was ours for the asking—but the prophecy said that we would conquer the enemy by February 4. As it was only the first of the month, we had to wait two more days in inactivity. Those were the baron's orders. The rest of the day was spent in strengthening our positions and gathering and loading our wounded on wagons

to be sent to the rear. It was situated some thirty-five miles north at the ranch of Suharev. Imagine the sufferings of those unfortunates who made that awful trip on crude two-wheeled wagons, without any roads whatsoever. Many froze to death before they reached the hospital.

In the night somebody on our side of the trenches shot a rocket in the sky. Immediately the Chinese opened unsystematic and mad shooting. Machine-guns began their dreadful clattering. The temptation was too great and, contrary to orders, we dashed forward into the battle. The baron was carried away by the mad impulse also, as we saw him galloping on his white horse in front of our lines, directing us toward the enemy's barbed wire. While we engaged the Chinese in hand-to-hand bayoneting, our cavalry attacked them from the rear. The fire began in Maimaichen, a Chinese section of the city. It became light from the numerous fires set by our volunteers in Urga, who never expected to survive their ordeal. Now we could see that we had reached the very walls behind which the enemy defended itself. Hand grenades soon broke the gates, windows, and doors, and a general massacre commenced. The fierceness of the street battles can be easily visualized by the fact that only eight hundred Chinese survived.

Mad with revenge and hatred, the conquerors began plundering the city. Drunken horsemen galloped along the streets shooting and killing at their fancy, breaking into houses, dragging property outside into dirty streets, dressing themselves in rich silks found in the shops. In front of Chinese banks lines were formed, where each man was given the right to plunge his bloody hand inside the strong boxes and get what his luck would bring him. Some were fortunate enough to drag out gold coins and bullion, some were less fortunate and got silver, while many found only paper currency and bank notes, which they immediately

threw into the streets as worthless. It seemed to be great fun for them, like a lottery: nobody knew what he would get. But a man was allowed to try his luck only once. Jokes and laughter deafened even the noise of the invasion. The scene was worthy of a good painter: wild men, with fresh blood on their hands, clothing and boots, standing in line before the bank's safes, awaiting their turn at the loot. The light from the numerous fires made their faces bronze. It was remarkable that nobody paid the slightest attention to their wounds; whether the excitement was too great or they had become used to cuts and bruises, I do not know. Perhaps, both.

A dramatic incident took place when the Chinese prisons were opened and the Russian prisoners liberated. Driven by hunger, they dashed for food, and tore raw meat with their teeth like wild beasts. Mad with joy they kissed all the horsemen they could get hold of. However, when one of them asked for a horse to be used in case the Russians retreated, he was shot on the spot. Led by Dr. Klingenberg, the mob attacked the Jews, and all of them perished in agony. The humiliation of the women was so awful that I saw one of the officers run inside the house with a razor and offer to let the girl commit suicide before she was attacked. With tears of gratitude she said a simple thanks and then slashed her throat. Some people hid themselves at the house of Mr. Guppel, an American citizen, and others ran to Tohtoho, a Mongolian prince; but both these men were forced to give away their friends under fear of death to themselves. The drunken mob invented a new sport of killing men on the streets by striking them direct in the face with thick wooden blocks. There was one Cossack, who was killing his own men right and left, until he was shot himself. Kadet Smirnov chose to strangle old women, because he enjoyed seeing them

quiver under the grip of his fingers as he broke their necks. Mr. Olsen, a Dane, was dragged along the streets by a rope attached to a wild horse until he was dead. This was done because he expressed disapproval of the outrages he witnessed. There was another foreigner, by the name of Olay, who died a horrible death too, because Dr. Klingenberg needed his medical supplies. Many women, together with their daughters, offered to sell themselves to save the lives of their husbands and brothers, but, as often as not, were cheated in the end.

Three days and nights passed in a bloody nightmare : the baron was true to his promises. But early in the morning of the fourth day he issued an order to the effect that those who were caught stealing private property or abusing the population would be hanged, and those who were found drunk would be punished by bamboo lashing : 100 to officers, 50 to privates, 25 to civilians. And, indeed, those who did not learn of the order and tried to continue pillaging were promptly hanged on the gates of the shops they entered. Colonel Sipailov, the new commandant of Urga, sent his men to search for offenders.

Colonel Laurentz, who was head of the commandant detachment, was accused of improper behaviour and ordered to be shot. Lieutenant Makeev was to execute the order. They rode in a cab outside the city limits, and the two of them went out to the dumping grounds. Here the colonel would be devoured by hungry dogs when he was dead. Both men saw those awful beasts roaming around. Soon they stopped and faced each other : one with a sarcastic smile, the other trembling because he had to do the killing. A few minutes passed in silence, and the cab driver began to show his impatience at being kept in the open windy spot on the cold winter day, when everything could be finished in a jiffy.

At last the colonel said slowly and ironically :

"Now, now. Go to it: be a man."

The other lifted his arm like an automaton, and pulled the trigger of his revolver. The bullet wounded the condemned man in the head, so that blood streamed down his face and closed his eyes. He laughed. Then his strength ebbed, and he sank to his knees. Spitting his own blood, he cried sarcastically: "Shame on the army, which has such an officer as you." His voice suddenly rose to a roar, and he commanded as he used to command before: "Shoot between the eyes, you ass."

But the ass could not control himself any longer. His arms dropped and the pistol rolled to the ground. In disgust the cab driver jumped forward, grabbed the gun and sent four bullets into the body of the colonel, who fell forward on his face. They did not investigate whether the man was dead or not, but simply got into the cab and rode back to Urga.

The series of executions which the baron imposed on his own men and the population in general had to be stopped abruptly when the Mongols reported that Chinese reinforcements were coming from the south. Those troops, several thousands in number, were not aware of the fact that Urga had already fallen into Russian hands, and therefore did not take necessary precautions. One group was very close, and another some five hundred miles in the Gobi Desert between Kalgan and Urga. The situation in the north was also grave, as those Chinese who left for Russia had been refused admittance and had turned back in an attempt to reach China by the south-west.

The baron sent his rival, General Riazuhin, to meet the first group from the south. The general was very mad, and when he encountered the Chinese some twenty-five miles from Urga he ordered his Cossacks not to take prisoners, but to kill all. Over a thousand people were exterminated.

Meanwhile the baron himself dashed to Choy-Ren through Mongut, where he changed horses for camels and rapidly advanced to Sair Usu, where he met the second Chinese group from Kalgan. His regiments, under the command of Barigin and Dugor Merin, defeated the Chinese in a night surprise attack, and only a few escaped death, madly running into the desert. Their retreat through the Gobi was full of hardships, and later when I reached China I learned that many men froze to death or died from lack of water and food, and only the most fortunate finally returned home to Kalgan. Here they reported that they encountered the devils from hell, and, of course, could not withstand their attack.

The baron had another problem on hand now, as Chinese from the north were rapidly approaching his vicinity. They intended to escape him at Ude, by the Khara Busu River. However, when they reached this spot they found themselves encircled by Russians. The battle which ensued lasted for three days and nights, but finally two thousand Chinese surrendered. As the baron needed reinforcements, and as already eight hundred Chinese were in his army, he granted his new prisoners life. They delivered their weapons and ammunition, and were encamped in the valley by themselves. Looking at their fires at night I wondered how on earth such a multitude could have been defeated by a handful of Cossacks. In the morning we discovered that we had been fooled. The lights burned all night, but the camp was empty: the Chinese had fled into the desert. We had no time for breakfast, as the baron ordered us to mount and dash after the Chinese. We gained on them in several hours and an easy victory was ours. All the officers and other leaders were shot on the spot, and the rest were surrounded by a strong escort and forwarded to Urga, where they were incorporated into a separate division. In order to secure himself from the Russian

Communists, the baron sent the 2nd and 3rd regiments up north to the Iro River to act as his outposts.

Being a man of extreme energy and determination Baron Ungern declared a complete reorganization of Mongolia. He established a cabinet of ministers, introduced currency and paper money, organized taxation and import duties, and began to drill the Mongolian army. A military school was opened, where one hundred young men from the best Mongolian families were taught military science. The baron also introduced industries, by opening several shops and teaching the Mongols how to apply modern methods in making their own clothing, leather, saddles, and tools. He ordered a radio station to be erected on one of the commanding hills, by which he could communicate with his allies. Kazagranti was in Uliassutai, Kazantzev in Kobdo, Kaigorodov in Altai, and farther west were Bakich, Dutov, Annenkov, and Buriat Taphaev.

For the purpose of better understanding, he sent a detachment under Captain Bezrodny, who performed a complete inspection of all White forces in Mongolia. Only Buriat Taphaev declined to be ordered about. He even fought a special punitive expedition sent by the baron under the command of Ensign Rudakov, after which he retreated north and stood by the Soviet border ready to cross into Siberia in case his terms were not accepted. He was granted independence and self-government in exchange for a promise to support the baron in case of an attack from the Reds.

By this time I had gained the recognition and confidence of my superiors, who recommended me as liaison official and observer for the Kazagranti division. I was to leave in thrée or four days, as soon as my papers were signed. Meanwhile, I had an opportunity to study the most interesting city in Mongolia.

Urga is divided into five distinct sections: Urga proper, with its monasteries called datzans, where fifteen thousand red and yellow lamas lived; the imperial palaces of the Bogdo; the Chinese quarters Maimaichen; the foreign settlement with Russians predominating; and Mongolor—a gold-mining domain.

Urga was beautiful with its temples and rich datzans, above which glittered their golden domes. In the centre of the city stood the temple of Maidari, with picturesque Tibetan towers eighty feet high. Here the throne-room of Bogdo, or the Living Buddha, was situated. Around it numerous datzans spread in large squares. In front of the datzans were many large revolving prayer-wheels. Worshippers from the most remote corners of the country turned these wheels, and with each complete revolution a melodious chime indicated that the prayer had gone forth to Buddha. Other pilgrims went in procession round the datzans, kneeling or prostrating themselves on the ground as an expression of special devotion to the deity. Between the monasteries a lively trade in cattle, hay, wool, saddles, and other simple wares of Mongolian industry was carried on. Here the bleating of sheep, the cries of camels, and neighing of horses, the sounds of the trumpets and drums of the worshippers, the cries of bargaining merchants, and the loud barking of thousands of dogs united in one Oriental bedlam.

Before the city on the hills picturesque green, red, and white palaces were seen. Bogdo lived in each of them in rotation, in accordance with the teachings of learned lamas. The palaces were filled with numerous useful and useless articles. Here all the luxuries of Asia mingled with the objects of Western civilization: phonographs, pianos, chemical apparatus, surgical instruments, guns of various types, collections of clocks, automobiles with bodies especially designed to resemble the palanquins of Chinese emperors. Learning that Europeans are fond of zoological gardens, Bogdo

built a zoo near his palaces too. During the recent battles a frightened elephant had run into the forests. Since he was thought to be indispensable, a search was organized and he was found peacefully grazing with a herd of camels some hundred miles away.

However, there was another side of the picture of the Mongolian capital, which was distinctly unpleasant, to say the least. The streets were so dirty and smelly that men had to use special narrow paths for communication. In addition, the streets were infested with numerous vicious-looking dogs. It was extremely dangerous to go out without a special stick with a sharp iron point. A horrible spectacle was presented also by the Mongolian custom of tossing dying people into the streets to be devoured by the dogs. The "sanitars of the city" would encircle the half-dead person waiting patiently for his last agonies to cease, before commencing their feast. A body untouched by dogs was considered to be rejected by the gods. However, such cases were extremely rare.

Half a mile from the central palace stood the sacred mountain of Bogdo Ul, covered with thick forests, and jealously guarded by lamas. In 1912 the commander of the Russian consulate's guards went hunting there for a rare specimen of goat. He killed two. The lamas declared that those goats represented an uncle and aunt of the Living Buddha, and immediately plunged into elaborate ceremonies. Upon persistent representation of the Mongolian government, the man was recalled to Russia and the incident was peacefully forgotten. At one time the feeling of indignation was so strong that Russians in Urga were afraid of a pogrom. Incidentally, these were the forests through which Hobotov with his Tanguts had made an attack against the Chinese, and liberated the Bogdo. This time, presumably, the occasion warranted the insult to the sacred woods. Indeed, Bogdo conferred upon the baron the title of Khan, thus giving him the

rank of the highest nobility. He promptly received rich yellow silk gowns, a hat with feathers, and other insignia of a Mongolian high prince, and a golden bridle for his horse. In order to reciprocate the favour, the baron announced the coronation of the Bogdo to be held next day with all the pomp of which the Mongolian court was capable. Thus both the baron and Bogdo Hutukhta were greatly pleased with their mutual courtesies.

There are three heads of Buddhism : the Dalai Lama at Lhasa in Tibet is the chief administrative officer of the yellow faith ; the Panchen Lama at Tashilunpo, situated at the extreme west of Tibet, represents the spiritual leadership ; and Bogdo Hutukhta in Mongolia is the reincarnation of Buddha himself, and therefore he is called the Living God.

Only since 1573 has the correct information of the Buddha reincarnations been recorded in sacred books. Djebson-Daranata-Gungo-Ninbo from the Tibetan monastery at Varang was the first historian. Seven reincarnations are credited to India, eight to Tibet, and one to Mongolia. It seems that reincarnations migrated westward together with the migration of the Faith itself.

Together with the historic records, the bodies of former Bogdo Hutukhtas were well preserved in their respective monasteries. They were embalmed for two months in a sitting position, after which their faces were gilded and eyebrows and lips brightly painted. Then these human statues were placed on large silver lotuses called suburgan and carried into the temples. Now they were called sharil and worshippers were allowed to see and pray before them, for a special contribution to the monastery.

When a Hutukhta died, numerous lamas are sent throughout the country in a search for babies who were born at the precise day and hour of the Hutukhta's death. Twelve boys are selected and delivered to

Potala, the palace of the Dalai Lama in Lhasa. Here they are subjected to a detailed study and observation, after which three boys are selected to represent reincarnation of the Spirit, the Body, and the Mind of the deceased. The reincarnation of the spirit is called Hubilgan : he is the true reincarnated Buddha. Two other boys, being inferior to him, are appointed as abbots to the most celebrated monasteries.

The Bogdo Hutukhta of whom I have been writing was born in Tibet in 1870. Five thousand lamas from Mongolia went to meet him on his way to Urga. The trip cost about £40,000, not including the exorbitant bribes that had to be paid to the wild Tanguts, inhabiting eastern Tibet. A good deal of this money was returned afterward by the bandits as contributions to monasteries.

Being the Living God, Hutukhta knew no restrictions whatsoever in his desires or fancies. When young he was very fond of European toys, especially those with winding mechanisms. He adored magazines with bright pictures. Like many children who are spoiled by lack of discipline, he became cruel. Once he burned the head of one of his lamas, sprinkling it with kerosene and applying a match. He liked to hunt down his people with bloodhounds or to smash the crowd of worshippers by madly galloping on a horse into their midst. Later he became a drunkard and quite easy with women, in consequence of which he contracted disease and lost his sight. During the Boxer uprising in China, and then during the Japanese War, he invited the Russians to use his country for transporting soldiers and ammunition. For this service the Tsar liberated Mongolia from the Chinese and granted to Hutukhta five million gold roubles. Not only he personally, but all Mongolians worshipped the "Magnificent White Khan" in Moscow. When the Russian consul would pass through the streets of Urga in his cab, Mongols used to run in a crowd behind his

car in order to inhale the sacred dust the cab lifted from the ground. And in many yurts the Mongolian noblemen used to stay hours in deep meditation in front of the picture of Nicholas II with their foreheads pressed against the portrait and their hands at their hearts. As in India and Tibet, Mongols looked upon the Tsar as their only salvation. All those countries have legends to the effect that the Russians will liberate them and re-establish their former glory.

The morning of the coronation was cold and windy. Five thousand soldiers were lined up from the palace to the temple, where the ancient throne hall was located. We waited several hours before we heard the sound of the Mongolian ceremonial flutes and gongs. Soon afterward the procession appeared at the end of a long street.

In front four lamas, armed with badger skins rolled in the form of a whip, dispersed the crowd in the street and made room for six flute players, behind which twenty-four of Bogdo's personal bodyguards followed. A magnificent palanquin, in which the Bogdo sat, was carried by eight geluns about ten feet above the ground. The high nobility followed the palanquin in a solemn group. Behind them were ministers and numerous yellow and red lamas. A crowd of civilians ended the procession. We stood at attention, while our band played the anthem—Russian, of course, as Mongols have none. The ceremony inside the temple, which I did not see, lasted about two hours, after which the baron made a speech, pointing to the former glory of Mongolia and of Genghis Khan, and calling the natives to a renaissance, through which their country would again establish itself among the great nations of the world. The Hutukhta replied suitably, after which he invited all to a feast.

So far as we laymen were concerned, the coronation was not much of a success, as the meal we received was insignificant.

In the excellent quarters of the Russian consulate, equipped with all European comforts, three barons discussed the ways and means of saving poor Russia from the Communists. Those gentlemen were: his Excellency, Baron Roman Feodorovich von Ungern-Sternberg, chief commander of all armies: Baron Tizengauzen, manager of the Russian gold mines in Mongolia; and Baron Berg, manager of the Russian coal mines, also in Mongolia. Miss Arhangelsky, common-law wife of Tizengauzen, attended to the details of hostess.

It was resolved unanimously that the Russian people were tired of radicals, and were dreaming of the restoration of the monarchy, with Grand Duke Michael as Tsar. But the poor souls had no leaders. Therefore, Baron Ungern, who had already proved himself to be unexcelled both as a warrior and as a statesman, would return to Siberia, where he would easily arouse the population to a new revolution. There was no doubt that his sword would unite all Russians, who would flock to his colours in multitudes as soon as the baron declared his intentions. Therefore, the initial size of the baron's armies was of no importance. It was necessary only to light the spark of the uprising on as wide a front as possible, and in a few months all would be back in Holy Moscow. Consequently, it was resolved to instruct all separate military groups of Russians in Mongolia to advance and attack Soviet Russia simultaneously on a front of several thousand miles, beginning at Transbaikalia and ending in faraway Turkestan. The new war would commence early in the spring, when the weather conditions would be more favourable and the cattle could be pastured on the way north. Meanwhile, during the winter, the army would be re-equipped,

clothed and thoroughly drilled. Of course, it was imperative to maintain an iron discipline. Therefore, Colonel Sipailov would be given a free hand in governing the civilian and military population in Urga.

The news of this meeting spread rapidly among us, to our complete satisfaction, as our previous sins became justified on the basis of patriotism.

By the end of February I was ready to leave Urga for Bangai Kure. As the road was hard and the travel dangerous at that time of year, I went to consult a Mongolian friend. The nomads were very clever in gathering all kinds of information, which they loved to present in the guise of fortune-telling, to the great surprise of the listener. I did not want to miss this opportunity to be informed, and therefore asked my friend to tell my fortune.

The Mongol burned the sheep shoulder and read the zigzags. He did not tell me anything new ; on the other hand, he gave me plenty to worry about. He told me that death from two men was waiting for me on the road ; they would shoot me in the back. He therefore advised me to go in a roundabout way through Zain Shabi. This trip would be three days longer, but it would be safe. He also suggested that I should bid farewell to my friends at once, come back to his yurt and stay with him that night and the next day. Then in the darkness of the second night, I might go to Zain Shabi. The plan seemed reasonable and I agreed.

The Mongol's advice proved to be sound. As I learned later, Colonel Sipailov, being a friend of Colonel Kazagrandi's, had sent two of his Cossacks into the hills with orders to kill me. Naturally they could not find me, for I was still in Urga. My friendly Mongol reported to me at supper that those fellows were given fifty lashes each on their return.

I recalled my farewell visit to that colonel the day before. He was having a little party with a few

selected friends when I arrived. A charming, but somewhat plump girl was serving liquor. She was the niece of General Semenov, but Sipailov terrorized her to such an extent that she yielded to his approaches and finally became his mistress. She offered me a drink too, which I accepted but did not touch under the pretext that I needed a clear head for the long trip before me. I knew that Sipailov often served poisoned liquors. The colonel paid no attention to me, however, as he was preoccupied in displaying his large collection of gold watches and jewellery. He introduced each article with a story of the person to whom it had belonged, and what death the owner had died.

Suddenly, as if inspired with extraordinary hospitality, he rose to his feet and asked to be excused for a minute, as he desired to give his guests a special treat. He disappeared into the kitchen, and in some five minutes came back, dragging a heavy sack.

"Hi ! Hi ! Hi ! Fellows, look who is here," he said. He opened the top of the sack and we saw the dead body of the girl who had served us drinks just a short time ago. He had strangled her noiselessly in the next room.

I left Urga secretly and in darkness, and rode the mountain ridges toward Bangai Kure. At first, I was greatly tempted to run away, but my common sense kept me moving toward Kazagrandi. The baron's popularity was so great that the Mongols would be most willing to capture and deliver me to Sipailov the moment they suspected me of deserting the "army" of the Bogdo Tzeriks (Knights of God). Besides, sooner or later I would be forced to descend into the valleys to replenish my food supplies. Then I would face men to whom explanations must be given.

I reached Bangai Kure in about ten days. I was received coldly by Colonel Kazagrandi, but he did

not dare harm me, as I was the baron's man. On the contrary, he appointed me adjutant of his Khathyl regiment in the honorary position of supervising the daily drilling of his Cossacks.

My civilian friends, whose children I had taught several months ago, were all mobilized now and served in different capacities. One of them almost lost his head for delivering to Kazagrandi some soap that was not quite satisfactory. In a rage the colonel beat him severely with a whip.

"Next time I suppose you'll bring face powder and lip-stick to my riders!" he shouted. "Get away, you rat, and see that I don't hear from you again."

The veterinary, Mr. Jacobson, who had cured me some time ago, was insulted at every turn for being of Jewish descent. He was not shot, because he was the only doctor available. It did not matter to the colonel that Jacobson's knowledge was limited to diseases of cattle, as that leader thought of his men as cattle, too. The charming daughter and wife of the doctor were appointed as nurses to our hospital, but they were mostly occupied in sewing elaborate silk blouses for the commander. They proved to be especially proficient in the embroidery of military insignia in pure gold.

Wealthy Russian business men were assembled in shops for making boots, baking bread, slaughtering their own cattle for the five hundred horsemen, delivering hay and firewood from their premises and corn from their fields. Naturally, all were ruined by these numerous confiscations for the patriotic needs of the army. As none of them had participated in the World War, and as none of them had experienced the revolution, they were much abused and harshly treated by the professional soldiers. The younger generation was called to the colours, and formed a separate regiment. This regiment was always sent to the most dangerous spots of the battle front. Almost all of them

perished, being ignorant of even elementary military training. Those who had foreseen such events had liquidated their property and left with their families for Kiakhta, preferring to give themselves up to the Reds.

Soon after I arrived in Bangai Kure my bloodthirsty friend, Filka, was sent west on some secret mission. He never returned. Later we found his skeleton hanging from a lonely tree on a hill. Ravens had eaten his flesh, and only his epaulettes and other personal belongings indicated who he was. I hoped that he did not die on my account.

I played my game carefully, aware that I was a marked man. My false identity seemed no longer as important as my many friends among the rank and file who helped me considerably. I never accepted a drink or a meal except from the common pot of the privates, and I never slept unarmed. I stayed with Mike and his group, and therefore it was impossible to catch me unprepared. Victor and Mariana were especially kind to me, and the three of us planned to run away from the Whites at the first opportunity. As usual, Mariana was the one who was always cheerful. She was our cook, mender of our torn clothing, and tender friend in our misfortunes. All our twenty-three men consulted her even on trifling matters, and she never refused her advice or co-operation.

Soon Colonel Kazagrandi discovered that I was an expert in machine-gun mechanics. As there were few men proficient in this art, my condition improved considerably. It is characteristic that Kazagrandi always took with him at night the most essential part of the guns, so that nobody would be able to operate them in case there was an uprising.

At the beginning of April, General Riazuhin suddenly encamped near Bangai Kure. He was sent by the baron to impress Kazagrandi with his might. Riazuhin,

the dirtiest human being I ever saw, made a thorough inspection of our troops and then called several of our outstanding officers to his headquarters. Some of them returned, some of them did not. Among the latter was Colonel Morton, a personal friend of Kazagrandi's. A search was ordered and Morton was found half dead in the hills. He refused to speak, and the only explanation he ever gave was that his horse threw him off. However, the Cossacks who found him said that his body showed signs of having been severely flogged.

After such reprimands by Riazuhin, I felt more uncertain than ever about the future, as I was considered the baron's man by the Kazagrandi group. I expected some kind of revenge from the colonel. He was afraid, however, to touch me in Bangai Kure. One evening he called me in, and in carefully chosen words, offered to let me perform a "delicate mission."

"You know, captain, that soon we are to advance against the Communists," he said. "Now we have to establish a close contact with other military groups west. Not many people can do that, and after careful consideration I have chosen you. I want you to go and see Taphaev. You may leave to-night. Good-bye and good luck to you. Come back as soon as you can."

He gave me his powerful hand. He was very strong and handsome, this man of Italian descent who imagined himself somewhat of a Cossack. At any rate, he painstakingly imitated that famous Cossack, Stenka Razin. He was most flattered when our Cossacks sang songs of Stenka Razin in his presence. They could always take advantage of this weakness of their leader's when they wanted something from Kazagrandi.

I left the colonel in deep thought. "These missions. They might be an honour, but they have usually turned out to be traps. What is this one?"

I was entitled to one horse, but I borrowed two more, and I galloped a hundred miles that night. I

picked a roundabout route, and arrived safely at Bulgun Tal, where I found my friends, "Uncle" Pavel and his brother Osip. Their morale had been badly shaken by the recent visit of one of the baron's flying squadrons under the command of a young scoundrel by the name of Bezrodny. He had almost sent them to a Mongolian prison, where they would have been certain to perish from cold, thirst and starvation. The drunkard left for the west, where he met with strong and determined opposition against his lawlessness on the part of the Buriat Taphaev. They fought and the Buriat defeated the Russian, who in a rage rode farther west. There was a rumour that he was in Uliassutai at the present moment.

I stayed with Uncle Pavel for two days. The peaceful atmosphere was most welcome. In the morning I swam in the cold Egin Gol, after which we had a steaming-hot breakfast. I helped the two brothers at their mill, repaired a fence round their vegetable garden, and walked in the hills. At night we fished from the boat with sharp long forks. The fish were attracted to the boat by the fire we kept burning at the stern. I enjoyed tremendously my little vacation, recalling happy days when I was free from any military entanglements. Many nomads visited Pavel on business. They brought with them news and gossip concerning the baron and his hated riders, who were taking the Mongolian cattle and horses for the army. The nomads were never paid for their goods and services. While in the capital they called us Bogdo Tzerik; here in the country they named the Russian soldiers zolik, which means devil.

One evening an old man came with his son, who wore the uniform of a Mongolian tzerik. He was from the Kazagrandi group and therefore we recognized each other. The young man was badly scared, and began unintelligibly to explain his presence here so far away from Bangai Kure. Finally I gathered that he had

been sent by High Noyon Kazagrandi to Commander Taphaev with a letter. But as he had not seen his folk for several months, he had taken this opportunity to call on them for a brief visit.

"Well, you do not need to hurry on my account," I said. "As a matter of fact, I am going also to Taphaev, and we can go together to-morrow."

Meanwhile Pavel was serving drinks and a simple supper. The old Mongol became exceedingly obliging and spoke to me with the utmost respect, trying to impress me with the extreme loyalty of his family to the baron, who was liberating the country from the Chinese. I had been watching them and thinking about that letter. If it was a business message, it would have been given to me. Then what kind of letter was it?

We had been eating and drinking, and I told Pavel to serve more drinks so that the Mongols would get drunk. Thus we made them talkative and friendly, and when they became intoxicated, I casually remarked that so long as I was going west I might as well deliver the letter so the young fellow could stay at home for a week at least. On my return trip I would pick him up and we would return to Bangai Kure together. The old man liked the idea and began thanking me most humbly. However, the young fellow hesitated. We drank some more, and again I repeated my friendly gesture. It was finally accepted. The Mongols soon departed in high spirits and left me the letter. It read :

DEAR NOYON TAPHAEV :

Please liquidate the young officer I have sent you recently, and oblige,

Your friend,
KAZAGRANDE.

Pavel's jaw dropped from astonishment and horror. We sealed the envelope again and sat staring at each other in silence.

Where should I turn now? Up north the Reds would hang me pronto. The west, east and south were blocked by several thousand miles of prairies which were hard to traverse so early in spring. It would take me several months to reach Turkestan, Manchuria or China. During all that time I would not be able to keep in hiding, and as soon as I was discovered by nomads my fight would be lost. These same thoughts had come to me many times in the past, and each time I had put them away, unable to solve my problem. My situation was now more desperate than ever, but what could I do?

"Now, Dmitri, my friend, I tell you what we can do," began Pavel cheerfully. "I have an old barn in the hills. You can stay there until late spring. I will deliver food to you, say once a week. What spring will bring I don't know, but at least you will live that long."

"No, my dear Pavel," I answered, "it is impossible. If anyone discovers me there, not only I, but you and your family will perish. No, this plan will not do."

We sat a few minutes more in silence, and then I rose to my feet and said:

"Get my horses ready, Pavel. I'll go to Taphaev."

We had a heated argument, and then Pavel said:

"Maybe you are right at that. Taphaev is a real man and he might not harm you if he sees that you are not guilty. Let come what may, as God is above all. Farewell to you, dear Dmitri, and be careful."

I left at once, so that if the Mongols changed their mind about the letter they would not be able to catch me. I reached Muren Kure early in the morning, fed my horses and rested myself until noon, and then continued my trip westward. In two more days I reached Taphaev, and was immediately granted an audience.

The man who held my life in his hands was a big-fat person with a large round head and sleepy Oriental

eyes. He gave an impression of dynamic but reserved strength. It seemed that nothing could move him from his predetermined policies. He offered me a seat by the fire, so that he could read the expressions on my face and easily catch my hidden thoughts. He lazily accepted the letter and gave it to his interpreter to read. He was not surprised or moved in any way when the contents of it became known to him.

"Do you know what is written in this letter?" he asked me through the interpreter.

"Yes, your Excellency," I replied. "It contains my death sentence."

"Why did you bring it to me then?" he asked.

"Because I am not afraid of justice, which I am sure I shall find here."

Taphaev gave his pipe to me, saying in good Russian :

"You must be brave, young man, if you play your game in this fashion. We'll take care of the matter later on. Now tell me news about that thief baron and his cut-throats."

I told him what I knew and in precisely the way I felt about it all. The Mongol interrupted me several times with his heavy oaths.

When I finished my report, Taphaev roared in indignation :

"The hell! They certainly can do as they please with Russians and Chinese, but how dare they rob and abuse my people?"

He called his interpreter and dictated a letter to Kazagrandi :

Pleased to accommodate you, noyon. I have several young men so that I do not know whom you wish me to hang. Shall we not reserve our executions for our enemies, the Bolsheviks, rather than our own people? Please do not kill my messenger, but send him back immediately, as I need all the men I have.

Greetings.

Taphaev held me at his headquarters several weeks until I could not help but ask him what that meant.

"Spring is coming, officer, and the White devils will leave my country in order to fight the Red devils. Nothing will remain of the baron's dirty forces, as all of them will perish. You may go then."

Thus I stayed with Taphaev until the end of April. I helped him, as far as my knowledge and experience permitted, to organize the first native military units of Mongolia. Mongolian patriots advanced him materials and money, hoping that some day they would be able to protect themselves against invaders and achieve the true independence of a sovereign state. All the time Taphaev maintained close contact with Colonel Kaigorodov in Altai, who was a real warrior and a gentleman, the last one left of the White movement in Russia. Kaigorodov hated the baron more than he ever hated the Soviet, which he fought so gallantly during the revolution.

Spring was here. The beautiful world was unrolling its magnificent flowery carpets and dressing its hills in fresh vegetation. Migratory birds again filled the forests with happy chattering and songs. Tired and hungry goats and deer ate their fill in the green juicy pastures. The awakened world was full of new hopes and energy, and it seemed that all were overwhelmingly happy. All, but men.

Spring was here, and with it were coming new horrors of battle, destruction, fire and painful death. The earth was in blossom, but we were polishing our rifles and sharpening our knives. Soon we would begin to kill again.

5

May 13th, 1921, the famous Order #15 was sent by the baron throughout Mongolia. Although "orders" had never been issued before, and although it was

issued on the thirteenth, this order bore the number 15 and was dated May 25th. This was done because the learned lamas, after due meditation, had found that those numbers were the lucky numbers, and therefore would ensure success. In order to make things more certain, for twenty thousand Mexican dollars, the baron hired seven thousand lamas to perform for him elaborate services in the temples, and call to his assistance all their mystic powers.

By that time he had received a letter from his chieftain, General Semenov, stating that he, Semenov, would also advance into Russia from three groups: General Sichev would come from the Amur River; General Saveliev from the Ussuri district; and General Glebov from Grodekovo. Semenov himself intended to advance towards Verkhneudinsk, where he asked the baron to join him. Of course, he did not fail to mention his friends, the Japanese, but in indefinite and ambiguous terms.

On May 27th, the baron assembled his army for the last review. He left Urga the same day, leading his men north. He ordered Colonel Sipailov to kill all Russians in the city, so that there would be no witnesses of his rule left. Only a small force remained in Urga, of which Djambolon was the commander. He immediately interfered, and innocent people were spared. Sipailov was a coward and, as such, obeyed most humbly. From the very beginning Djambolon's group showed itself opposed to the lawlessness, cruelty and plunder which had held Urga in terror for long and dreadful months. Djambolon did not believe in the success of the baron's venture, and therefore acted accordingly. For example, he dispatched Sipailov with a few pieces of artillery, hoping that he would be caught by the Reds and hanged. However, fate held in reserve another and more dreadful end for this vicious creature. Later, when he escaped to Manchuria, he was recognized by the Chinese, who sent

him to their agonizing penitentiary for the remainder of his days.

The baron sent Riazuhin to the rear of Troizko-Savsk, which is situated on Russian territory, opposite Kaikhta, on the very border. He himself moved with two columns through Kui Birota and Dzulsika, crossed the Khara River, and the difficult Manhotai Mountains, and finally stopped at Kiakhta. Simultaneously, other White troops on Mongolian territory also entered Russia. Kazagrandi being some forty miles west of the baron. I joined the Suharev Cossack regiment in the beginning of the campaign, and found myself again under the command of the beastly Kazagrandi. But Suharev hated the colonel and kept his men several miles away, and so I felt reasonably safe.

When we reached Kiakhta, we received the first bad news. Prince Bayer Gun, commander of the Chahar division, left his position at Ubitzik and attacked the Soviet alone. Apparently he thought Communists were as easy to conquer as the Chinese. However, he was badly defeated. Not only did we lose that whole unit, but the silly attack disclosed our groupings and our plans to the enemy. The baron was furious, but could not repair the damage. He visited the wounded, and as the hospital's personnel was not sufficient, many men were unattended. In his rage he grabbed Dr. Klingenberg, tossed him to the ground and began lashing him with bamboo until the doctor's legs were broken and he was a complete wreck. Thus the only available medical assistance was destroyed at the very beginning of the campaign.

In order to reinforce what little was left of the Chahars, the baron sent for Prince Puntzuk, governing Bangai Kure province. When the prince arrived, he could not but express his doubts in regard to combating the regular army of Bolsheviks, which was equipped with all the machinery of modern war. The

baron was enraged and ordered the prince to be buried alive, which was done.

Hesitation now meant annihilation. It was imperative to begin fighting, if we were to hold the initiative in our hands. Accordingly, we entered Russia and faced the rich village of Buluktai, where we intended, after victory, to obtain large supplies of bread and flour. Nechaev was sent to encircle the place, and proceeded to attack at the proper time, while we were late. Suddenly, the baron realized the situation and sent us ahead to assist Nechaev. After two hours of mad galloping we reached the front, and found that Nechaev already occupied the village. Most of the inhabitants had fled in panic, which indicated rather conclusively that the baron was mistaken in his calculation of a hearty welcome from the Russian peasants. In a rage he ordered the remainder of the civilians to assemble in a large barn, to which he set fire on all sides, so that everyone perished in agony. During this mass execution the baron prayed to his Buddha.

Now we went to "liberate" another region from the hated Communists' yoke. This time it was the village of Keran. A detachment of Reds which was stationed here was too inadequate to oppose us. Accordingly, the Communists retreated, leaving us Ust-Keran also. Both villages were completely deserted, and we encamped here for a well-deserved rest. It was too early in the year for any manoeuvres, and therefore the Communists did not expect us in Russia so soon. By short marches we could easily advance to Verkhneudinsk, and take that important strategical point without difficulty. However, we missed that opportunity, as the baron held us at Keran for three days in inactivity.

Early in the morning of the fourth day we got what was coming to us; the Red cavalry arrived on the scene and called us into battle. It lasted six hours, and the Reds retreated. We followed the enemy, and

did exactly what they wanted us to do : we entered the forest, where they had concentrated a strong machine gun detachment and their artillery. We were in the middle of the forest when the Reds opened deadly fire. Our men were swept from their feet like grass before a scythe. Men and horses were piled together in bloody heaps. With great difficulty the officers subdued the panic, and the men began to fight gallantly. The whole day they battled against heavy odds, and by late evening the White army escaped from the trap. Exhausted, we encamped in the valley some six or seven miles from Kiakhta. The baron ordered us to attack this town early next morning.

Two hours before we were ready to advance the Reds opened an offensive at our left flank, tore our lines and attacked our rear. In great panic, half asleep and barely dressed, our men ran headlong. We left behind us one of our batteries, and many machine guns. The baron himself was wounded in the groin.

Meanwhile, the main body of the army attempted to slow down and meet the enemy in the hills. However, the Communists attacked us from our right flank now, smashed our formations there and came in the rear again. We found ourselves completely encircled. The Whites threw away their heavy ammunition, artillerymen cut loose their horses from the guns, the hospital personnel abandoned their wounded, men in charge of our transport left all supplies, ammunition and food, and all dashed madly into the hills toward Keran, passed that place like lightning and finally reached Krasnovka, where we stopped for breath.

That night we discovered that we had nothing to eat, as we had lost all our supplies. We had nothing to feed our rifles either, as all ammunition was left to the enemy. We had lost our artillery and valuable transport facilities. But what was even more tragic was that our medical men had thrown away their

stores and even bandages, and now our wounded had to take care of themselves. It was remarkable, indeed, how little strategy the baron knew. He was defeated by a much weaker opponent, who had only half as much artillery and half as many men. Thus, the mysteries of the sheep shoulders were defeated by the ordinary common sense of the Communists.

We were not in a position to fight any more. We shamefully ran back into Mongolia, where fighting with defenceless Chinese merchants and Russian business men was much easier and more profitable. The Ero River was in our way, and as we were afraid to lose time in building bridges or in laying down ordinary pontoons, we were ordered to cross the river on our horses. Regiment after regiment began jumping from the high shore into the swift waters. The Chinese regiments had to be forced to perform the dangerous feat, and a great many of them drowned. Somebody found narrow Mongolian boats crudely made of ordinary rough logs. The Chinese asked the baron for permission to use the boats. He agreed on condition that he who preferred the boat to his horse would receive ten lashes of bamboo. Many chose it as more agreeable. It was very funny to see the Chinese form lines, indifferently receive their ten lashes, jump into the boat and ride across the river safe and dry. We could not help laughing at our yellow comrades. We had our first meal in twenty-four hours on the farther shore of that river, and ate the detestable sweet meat of freshly killed horses.

The army moved on to the Huitun River and, reaching Urmuktui, turned westward to Darha Hit, on the Orkhon. Here we joined the fresh forces of General Riazuhin. Two Mongolian regiments from Urga arrived there too. The baron recovered his self-confidence again. He hanged Colonel Arhipov because that gentleman had stored a hundred pounds of gold

from a secret income, and he also burned alive Dr. Engelgard-Esersky, who had just escaped from Soviet Russia. First Lieutenant Stepanenko performed the horrid execution. Most of the men did not mind the spectacle because they were used to such things, but there was a fresh man among us, by the name of Petkovsky, who was so horrified at seeing a living man broiled that he jumped into the river and drowned himself. The simple soul preferred to die rather than remain among the "White knights."

General Riazuhin was in possession of the main body of supplies, and the baron re-equipped his army in a few days, after which he ordered a new march against the Reds. But having had a bad experience with them, he dispatched his treasury, all the extra supplies and ammunition, and all goods stolen from Chinese and Russian merchants, to Uliassutai. Captain Baranov with two hundred Cossacks was to guard the transport.

The baron also ordered his silver to be hidden at the bottom of the Orkhon River near the Erdeni-Dzu monastery, as he knew that it would not be touched there. An old legend has it that once the wild Dzungari attacked Halha. When they reached the Erdeni-Dzu monastery, the god Dzu met them with his lions and the Dzungari ran in panic. Mongolia was a Chinese province then, and therefore the Chinese Emperor Youn-Dzhen took the matter in hand. He conferred upon the Orkhon River the title of tushe-gun, or prince of the fifth degree, with a salary of four hundred *lan* of silver a year. This silver was brought yearly from China and dropped to the bottom of the river. It is conservatively estimated that about sixty thousand pounds weight of silver were thus deposited here during the last two and a half centuries. With the baron's addition, the river contains a real treasure.

Again we moved towards Russia, this time along the Selenga River. The Communists did not expect

us; after having thoroughly defeated the White army at Kiakhta. Therefore, we easily conquered the villages of Tzeji, Ataman-Nikolsky, and Narinsky. Again the Russian peasants did not show any enthusiasm at our coming. On the contrary, everybody ran into the forests and hills. We had a rest at Toreisky, after we had kicked out the Communists from that village. The next day we took Novo-Dmitrievskoe, near the Misovaya railroad station. Here we encountered a strong enemy division, composed of full-fledged Communists. With the exception of some hundred men, all the Reds perished in the fierce battle. We shot every prisoner.

Now we turned east, towards Verkhneudinsk, where General Semenov promised to meet us. At Gosiny Lake the 35th Communist Cavalry Division gave us battle, but were badly defeated, leaving us two hundred prisoners and one battery. The prisoners were forced to dig large communal graves, at which they subsequently were lined up. Machine-gun fire was directed upon them, and they fell into the fresh grave. The lucky ones were instantly killed, but those who were only wounded were buried alive when we filled the grave with earth.

The Red nurses were given to soldiers hungry for women's bodies. All died during the endless humiliation.

As we had lost many horses, the baron requisitioned all animals available from the peasants for which they received IOU certificates, payable "when we reach Moscow." By this time we discovered that three cavalry regiments of Reds were rapidly moving from the north and three from the east, while the south was blocked by the notorious Schetinkin division, composed of Siberian mountaineer-sharpshooters.

The desperate battle commenced soon, and we held our own during two long days and nights against all odds. We hoped that Semenov and his three generals

would come to our rescue in time, but alas, Semenov changed his mind when he discovered the Reds were fighting in earnest. Soon the air fleet arrived and began to bombard us. As we had no anti-aircraft guns, we were defenceless against aeroplanes. We began to retreat toward Mongolia. Passing through the villages in our path, we killed all the wounded Red soldiers we found, and also those peasants who had extended their hospitality to the sufferers. Captain Krebtov was especially proficient in performing this terrible slaughter of defenceless people.

At last we reached our new home country, Mongolia. The army was in a pitiful state. An overhauling of the war machine was no longer possible, as our extra supplies and ammunition were already in Uliassutai. Moreover, it became exceedingly difficult to provide men with food and clothing, as all Russian and Chinese business houses were ruined by previous requisitions and by mobilization of their personnel. Urga had been captured by the Reds, as had Bangai Kure, Zain Shabi and Uliassutai.

What became of our transport with its two hundred Cossacks nobody knew. The baron decided to move to Uriankhai, where we could join General Bakich at Chiguchak, a famous place where Russian officers were selling their wives to the Chinese and thus earning their living expenses.

For the time being, however, we rode toward Muren Kure. Buriats and Transbaikals began deserting en masse. All Mongols were hiding, and the country looked empty. The baron, with his head dropped to his chest, silently rode in front of his troops. He had lost his hat and clothing. On his naked chest numerous Mongolian talismans and different charms were hanging on a bright yellow cord. He looked like a reincarnation of a prehistoric ape man. People were afraid even to look at him. . . .

About seventy miles from Muren Kure we learned that the place was occupied by Reds, as was Khathyl. We were caught in another trap, as strong Communist forces were following us. The officers now sent two of their number to General Riazuhin, offering him the command, as nobody trusted the baron any more. Riazuhin replied with one hundred lashes of bamboo to each of the representatives. It proved to be the last drop—the patience of the people was exhausted. One dark night the most trusted Orenburg detachment suddenly opened with a machine-gun on Riazuhin's tent. He was wounded. Just as Captain Nudatov was applying bandages to his general, a Cossack approached them from behind and shot Riazuhin dead. The same night Colonel Evforittsky brought up his machine-gunners and sent several volleys into the baron's tent. The baron dashed out, jumped on his horse and galloped away into darkness. Teapot ran to the scene and stopped in astonishment, when a Cossack swung his sword over his head.

"Me? How dare you?" he asked, but the next moment the sword fell on his head while other people were emptying their guns into his body. Suddenly the baron returned to the camp and everybody stood motionless, paralysed with terror. They had been accustomed to fearing and obeying him for many bloody months, and now when he appeared before them again, they stood helpless as children. Fortunately Captain Makeev saved the situation. He grabbed his gun and fired. The baron pulled up his charger and dashed into the darkness, away to his most trusted Buriat regiments. But alas, they met him with a wild volley. He now turned to his Mongols, but they galloped away from their Tzagan Burkhan. Bleeding, exhausted and helpless, Baron von Ungern-Sternberg slid from his saddle and fell to the ground unconscious.

In the meantime the uprising raged through the camp. All executioners and informers were brought in

and chopped with swords by the infuriated Cossacks. When revenge had been satisfied and passions cooled off, Colonel Kostromin assumed command and immediately turned the army south. A few days later they passed Urga at Sair Usu, which was several hundred miles away from the advancing Reds, and turned north-east. After long, hard marching they reached Bor Nor safely, where the Chinese military delegation from Hailar met them with an offer to transport all to Vladivostok on condition that the Russians would deliver up their weapons. This they did, and accordingly they were placed in trains and in several days found themselves among Semenov's Cossacks at Grodekovo. In this instance, as in many others, the Chinese were surprisingly kind and forgetful of the crimes their enemies had committed against them.

And the baron? The Mongols did not dare kill Tzagan Burkhan, their God of War. Besides, they firmly believed that he could not be killed. Had they not had convincing proof of this just recently? Not only had Russian Cossacks shot at the baron, but the whole Buriat regiment had fired several volleys at him, and what was the result? The shells did not harm Tzagan Burkhan. Now several hundred Mongolian riders were lying on the ground discussing the situation. Finally they decided to send the bravest among them to the exhausted baron. When they reached the God of War, they respectfully bound him with ropes and left him where he lay. Then they departed at a gallop in all directions so that the wrath of the Tzagan Burkhan would not know whom to follow.

What were the baron's thoughts that lonely night? The terrible pain caused by the ropes, together with thirst, hunger and cold, must have recalled to his fevered mind the agonies he had made others suffer. Death lurked in the darkness, for the country was

infested with wolves. Probably he recalled his own pack of wolves which he kept in Daurai, and to whom he had fed some of his prisoners. Rolling in agony, he must have suffered several deaths before the sun rose.

As morning became day, the burning rays of the sun must have beaten mercilessly on his head, and plagued him with incredible thirst. Again and again, I imagine, he fell into delirium and dreamed that he himself was tied to the stake and burned alive as he had burned many people in his life.

Meantime, a small scouting party of Reds had descended into the valley. In the distance they noticed a man lying. He moaned weakly, moving his face back and forth against the grass in his attempt to escape the ants that were eating him alive. The Reds came closer and asked :

" Who are you, stranger ? "

The baron came to his senses and shouted back in his thundering manner :

" I am Baron Ungern."

The scouts turned their horses so sharply that they lifted the animals on their hind legs. The next moment they galloped madly away, for such was the baron's reputation for terror and cruelty that all men feared him. However, the Communists soon came back. They realized that it was silly to be afraid of a man whose hands and feet were bound. Now they dismounted, unbound the general, brushed the insects from his face, and gave him a drink. They understood only too well that fame and a great reward would be bestowed upon them for delivering this man into the hands of the proletarian government. They would be presented during court proceedings, their names and pictures would appear in the papers as heroes. Not only those simple souls, but the rest of the Red command wanted their share of acclaim. The result was that the baron had all the comfort he might wish.

He was even brought to Verkhneudinsk in a private, first-class Pullman car.

Later, when he was brought up for trial, everybody was bitterly disappointed, as the baron was accused not as a warrior and the enemy leader, but as an ordinary bandit. He was found guilty of murder and sentenced to death. As a kind gesture, they allowed him to die before a firing squad instead of by the noose.

When the news of the baron's execution reached the Living Buddha, he ordered services to be held in temples throughout Mongolia. To the accompaniment of bronze cymbals and huge drums, a last prayer was said to Baron von Ungern-Sternberg, the reincarnation of the Great Genghis Khan and the God of War.

6

Just before the uprising of "The Knights of Plunder, Fire and Murder," it had become known that the baron's most esteemed private counsellor, Djambolon, had escaped into Manchuria with the large treasure entrusted to him by the baron.

It also became known that Colonel Kazagrandi had deserted the battlefields and dashed after another of the baron's treasures, which he dispatched to Uliasutai, under protection of his most faithful Cossacks. If Djambolon, who had used automobiles to make his escape, could not be caught, it was a different matter with Kazagrandi, who had to bring with him his five hundred men in order to rob the large and well-protected caravan. The baron sent Suharev to arrest and deliver Kazagrandi to the army's headquarters. He promised to entertain his men with such an execution of the traitor that even the devil himself in his dark hell would tremble with horror. I left with my

commander, Suharev. I was glad to leave the baron as life in his army was intolerable, and I would, moreover, be able to join my friends, Victor and Mariana, under the leadership of our beloved cynic, Mike.

Meanwhile the Reds were entering the country in small and large groups, and it became extremely dangerous to ride through open valleys. Consequently, we climbed the high ridges of the Sayan. By forced marching, we rapidly advanced towards Uliassutai and expected to catch Kazagrandi by the end of the fourth day. And, indeed, by noon we saw his band encamped in a closed valley. Their horses were grazing, and they themselves lay carelessly scattered about, many asleep in the grass. Near the large white tent of the commander, a banner bearing the image of St. Nicholas hung motionless in the still warm air. Over the kitchens, bluish smoke was streaming into the sky. Farther, by a small creek, groups of soldiers were washing their clothing. They were surrounded by bright yellow, red, blue and green dots which indicated clean clothing spread on the grass to dry. Heaps of saddles and baggage were everywhere and long rows of rifles stood in perfect arrangements in groups of five. The sunshine of late summer wrapped everything in a soft mantle; the whole picture looked most happy and peaceful.

"Now is the time to get them," said Suharev in a harsh voice. The rude voice of our commander mercilessly broke the charm of the enchanting day, and I felt a shock at the thought that now we would dash down the smiling valley to kill our own people. It seemed incredible.

Cautiously we descended into the forest. Suddenly, as happens sometimes on summer afternoons, it began raining. It seemed as if the quick, warm drops of water were being sprinkled on the men as a warning of impending danger. The whole camp awoke and in a few minutes, before we were ready to attack, the

tents were folded, horses saddled, and in long lines the riders began climbing a low hill to the west. To our own great astonishment, as they reached the summit, a machine-gun volley was heard and a few of Kazagrandi's men fell to the ground. The whole group hesitated for a moment, and they swiftly turned back into the valley. Here they formed themselves for defence against the unknown enemy. We saw the enemy cavalry reach the top of the hills and then rapidly encircle Kazagrandi's troops. Our field glasses told us the story: those were Communists attacking. The battle was fierce, as both factions knew only too well that mercy did not exist between Whites and Reds; it was much better to die in battle than to be caught alive by the enemy.

Suharev was standing still, calmly observing the developments below. He paid no attention to the grumbling of his own men, but drew his sword and silently signalled us to follow him. It seemed to us that Suharev had made up his mind to let Kazagrandi have what was coming to him. In deep silence we followed our leader. When we reached the valley, he led us at a gallop towards some hills to the west. The men, although silent, began to show signs of impatience and indignation. We climbed the hills in front of us, and suddenly a panorama of the fight opened before our eyes. Kazagrandi's group was rapidly retreating. Desperately they were defending themselves as the Communists advanced in a semicircle. They seemed doomed to perish in a very short time. Inexpressible hatred blinded us, and without command, we all drew our swords. At the next moment we heard the roaring command of our leader:

"Attack, MARCH!"

We answered with a loud "Hurrah!" and galloped down the slope toward the Reds. We reached the enemy from behind and smashed their rear by our surprise attack. Hand-to-hand battle commenced, but

the morale of the Communists was badly shaken when their sure victory was torn from them so suddenly. Meanwhile, Kazagrandi took advantage of the enemy's confusion and attacked fiercely. The Reds broke away in a panic, and we pursued them slashing right and left, until they entered the forest. Our trumpeter called us together back into the valley, where our leaders assembled us in a warlike formation. Holding our loaded rifles in hand, we slowly moved out of the valley to the west. Our advance and rear guard protected us from sudden attacks. We rode in silence, carefully watching our outposts who rode high above in the hills.

We let Kazagrandi's men, many of whom were wounded, go ahead, and remained in the rear to protect them. I saw my friend Victor from a distance. Apparently he was wounded, as his right arm was wrapped in bloody bandages. Mariana led his horse and held his rifle over her own saddle. Later I learned that when Victor was disabled his wife had defended him gallantly.

We rode slowly, expecting a new battle to begin any minute, as our outposts reported that the Reds were following us. Several times we held back when we found ourselves in favourable surroundings. We would hide behind the rocks, bushes and trees, and wait until the enemy came close. Under our sweeping fire they suffered heavy losses, and rapidly retreated each time, being unable to get at us.

Thus we rode all day, and by evening entered a long, narrow valley that led to Darkhat Kure. Soon we reached those peculiar rocks which run across the valley, almost closing it at the end. Here we decided to encamp for the night. Behind us the valley ran another four miles and then sharply turned south, where the famous monastery was situated.

No sooner were our kettles filled with freshly-killed beef than our guards at the top of the rocks called an

alarm ; the enemy were rapidly approaching for a new attack.

Half our men swiftly ran up the hills, lay down in a line, and opened fire. Another group entered the forest to protect our rear, and the rest assembled on horses for a counter-attack. Our fire forced the enemy to stop and dismount. They advanced now on foot. Meanwhile our horsemen attacked and smashed their left flank. The Reds began to retreat toward the forest, where they were met by the fire of our second group. At the same time we ran down the hills and attacked them at the front. The enemy fled, leaving many dead and wounded on the battlefield.

At last we could eat our supper and fall off into the sleep of exhaustion, our hands clutching our rifles.

Among many others, I was assigned to night patrol duty. I and my five men had to cover certain sections of swampy lowlands. No shooting was allowed ; we were given knives only. If encountered, the enemy must be killed silently and swiftly, so that not a sound would reveal our whereabouts.

We descended and without difficulty reached the swamps. In about a quarter of an hour I signalled the men to stop ; I had heard a sound as of somebody plunging his feet into the water. That fellow must have been a terrible ignoramus, for in such patrolling one should never take his feet from the ground, but slowly drag them forward. I motioned my boys to lie down in the swamp. We listened intently, and heard somebody take another step. Soon we saw two Red patrols directly in front of us. We leaped forward, 'knocked them down and pushed their heads under the water. We held them there until their convulsions stopped and they lay still. Now we crawled forward on all fours. I signalled the men to move toward a rock that had become visible. Here we could dry a little and rest. When we had almost reached our destination, the rock suddenly moved. It was another

Red who had been sitting there motionless. One of our men threw a knife and got him in the back. Before he could shout, we dashed forward and pushed him under the water. Again we advanced, and again we killed some unfortunate fellows, until we had cleared our sector of all enemies.

The swamp ended at last, and we increased our speed. Soon we could see the enemy's camp fires in the distance. Again on our bellies we moved towards the camp, and suddenly discovered that it was deserted, the fires being kept by a few soldiers in order to misdirect our attention. Immediately we turned back, and in an hour reported to headquarters. The men were aroused from their sleep, horses saddled and the regiments silently left camp, moving south. When the enemy encircled and attacked our camp, they would find it empty also.

Thus a great game of hide-and-seek began. As we had lost almost half our men, we had to exercise great precaution, and we moved in zigzags through the country, farther and farther south-west toward Uliassutai, which we believed was free of Reds. The enemy had suffered great losses, too, and we were certain that without new reinforcements they would not dare attack us openly. Moreover, they were moving away from their base of supplies. Those who still followed us we intended to tire out by incessant marching, and then to attack them during one of the dark nights and destroy them completely.

Each party had an equal chance of outwitting the other, and both had expected reinforcements. We counted on two hundred Cossacks whom the baron had dispatched with his caravans to Uliassutai, and the Reds hoped for Schetinkin's famous regiment of sharpshooters which was rushing to the scene of the skirmishes. In a few days, however, we found that we were much mistaken in our calculations. The baron's men, finding themselves pursued by the Reds

from Khathyl and Muren Kure, buried the treasure worth an enormous sum in some secret cave among the mountains, and escaped into the south. After incredible hardships, they finally reached Manchuria, where the Chinese provided them with free transportation to the Russian Far East. Schetinkin, with his mountaineers, however, soon joined the forces of our enemy.

Suddenly we found ourselves outnumbered and outwitted, and our life became an endless nightmare. Schetinkin's men fired at us from behind the rocks, all the time keeping us in the valleys at their mercy. Our numbers rapidly decreased. In one day, I lost three of my friends. One of them was mortally wounded in the chest when he tried to climb the hill in a desperate attempt to prepare a foothold for more of us, so that eventually we would be able to hide among the rocks. Another friend, Lieutenant-Colonel Dmitriev, was shot through the temple, so that the nerves of both eyes were severed and he lost his sight. He sat on the ground, and streams of blood flowed through his fingers as he held his hands to his face.

"Darkness . . . darkness," he kept repeating in his agony.

I ran to his assistance. As soon as he heard me, he rose to his feet with great difficulty and said in an angry voice :

"Back to the front line, whoever you are ! "

When he learned that it was I, he asked me for a hand-grenade. I gave it to him, and he began crawling toward the enemy's positions, where a machine-gun was rattling. He succeeded in throwing his grenade and destroying the machine-gun and its men before he was killed.

The third man, a former merchant at Darkhat Kure, was shot through the forehead and passed away instantly. I turned him on his back. A happy smile

was on his lips, as if he finally had reached the place he desired.

For seven days and nights the Reds shot at us from the hills. We had no time for eating or sleeping. Finally we got into a pitiful state when both men and their horses slept moving on the road. Special patrols were assigned to keep the regiment awake. I myself was caught in sleep by Mariana with my horse walking mechanically some mile and a half from the main body of our troops. As we began losing less and less of our men, we rightly concluded that our enemy was in precisely the same deplorable condition and grasped the opportunity for revenge.

God knows at what monastery we encamped the seventh night. The abbot with several priests visited our camp, asking us to leave the place so that their ancient temples would be preserved. In return, they promised to perform their mystic services the whole night so that we would defeat the enemy in some other battle in the near future. As we had originally planned to use the high walls of the monastery as a fortress, behind which we could at least have food and rest, we were disappointed. But it was no time to quarrel.

We began to bargain, and easily came to terms. We would leave the monastery, but the monks would lead us that very night by secret paths into the hills behind our enemy. We left our tents standing in the valley and immediately started. By daybreak, we occupied a wonderful position in the rear of the Communists. Now we saw them riding up those mountains and followed them closely. As soon as they noticed our camp they went to attack, thinking that we were asleep. We waited until all the men entered the valley and suddenly opened fire from the heights. Now they were defenceless, and we shot them down. Finally, they threw away their saddlebags and heavy ammunition and ran in panic. But their retreat was cut off, and we massacred them like cattle in a corral.

Somehow and somewhere they found an escape, however, and soon disappeared. We never again saw them or any other group of them. The victory brought us many rifles and plenty of ammunition, clothing and food.

We encamped at the very summit of the mountains. Guards were posted at commanding points and the rest of the army indulged in a plentiful meal, after which we slept for long hours. The Mongols found us there, hiding from the world at large. They brought with them presents and thanks from the abbot, saying that from now on we would be protected by the mighty spirits of their mountains and valleys, and that we need not be afraid of our enemies. Accordingly, we might descend from the dangerous hills and ride below safe and unmolested; the country was clear. We thanked the monks sincerely, and sent the abbot a good Russian pipe, a leather wallet, a cheap watch, and some other trifles that nomads would surely appreciate.

So far as I know, this was the last battle between the White and Red Russians, and the chapter was closed both for the Russian revolution and for us. It is true, there was another attempt to attack the Reds, led by General Pepeliaev from the Russian Arctic, but they all perished in the ice and snow before they could engage the Bolsheviks in battle.

On our second day of peace, we encamped by a small mountain river and the men went for a swim. I was on duty. For the purpose of stationing the guards, I rode up the hill to observe our position. As I stood between two oak trees on the summit, I suddenly noticed gold glittering at my feet. Upon examination, I discovered that it was the golden epaulet of a cavalry colonel. Near by was another epaulet, that of a lieutenant. I lifted both of them and rode down to see Suharev. He was disturbed and we went back and inspected the surroundings closely. Under the

bushes we found two skeletons dressed in uniforms ; in the inside pocket of one was an old wallet containing a picture of a beautiful woman and a letter dated two years before from a wife to her beloved husband, Colonel Filipov. They were two brothers in our regiment, both cavalry officers, one a colonel and the other a lieutenant. Several months ago Kazagrandi dispatched them with a special message to Kaigorodov, from which trip they never returned. We thought that they probably preferred to stay with that leader, who was just and kind to his men. Now we discovered why the two brothers had disappeared : they had been killed by Kazagrandi.

Suharev wanted to hang Kazagrandi immediately, but he was afraid it would start a mutiny. Instead, he decided to arrest the colonel and deliver him to Baron Ungern, who would punish him for all his past sins, as promised. The news of the Filipov brothers' execution spread like lightning among the troops, and Kazagrandi, under the pretext that the present position was not satisfactory, assembled his men and moved out of the camp. We remained under another pretext : to serve as a rearguard of the main body. However, when Kazagrandi's men disappeared, we immediately followed them.

Kazagrandi made a long stretch of some thirty miles, and late at night encamped in a narrow, secluded cavity among sharp rocks. He suspected Suharev, and prepared himself for a fight. He never suspected, though, that Suharev was encamped just two miles away up the hills overlooking the cavity. We were much weaker than Kazagrandi, and therefore could not attack him openly ; nevertheless, in the morning he found himself in our power.

At dawn, we descended the hills and removed all guards. Our men were stationed at the piles of enemy rifles, their machine-guns and artillery. Ten of Suharev's men silently entered Kazagrandi's tent,

removed his weapons, which he kept by his bed, and woke him up. It is impossible to describe the astonishment of Kazagrandi, who was used to unlimited power over the life of his subordinates. He was not given a chance to utter a single word. The men immediately put him on a horse and galloped away.

Meanwhile, the camp awoke and in surprise looked around on what we had done. They were defenceless as we held all their weapons under our guard. They were given their choice of joining Suharev or being arrested and forwarded to Urga. Although Suharev was by no means tender in his treatment, he was just. Moreover, the people dreaded the word "Urga," and its mad baron, and therefore they willingly joined Suharev. Their weapons were returned to them and we all sat down happily to breakfast.

Meantime, ten Cossacks with Kazagrandi were dashing along the valleys, and by late afternoon reached the place of execution of the two brothers. They brought the colonel to the skeletons and offered to let him say his last prayers, as here he was going to die too. Kazagrandi was petrified, and humbly fell on his knees, asking them not to chop him with swords. The men silently lifted him up and tied him to the trunk of the tree on which the Filipovs were hanged. They stripped his clothing from him and then brought out their vicious whips. Without any hurry, they began lashing the colonel. His body turned red, then blue, and then blood streamed from the cuts in his flesh. They whipped him until he was dead.

Late that night the Cossacks returned to our camp and reported that Colonel Kazagrandi had attempted to run away, and they were forced to shoot him. Nobody believed them, but it was a plausible story, and the men accepted it as a good excuse. However, the Mongols reported the truth to us next day. They also reported the death of General Riazuhin, the uprising in the army and the death of the baron.

They said that Colonels Kazantzev and Kaigorodov had been surrounded by the Reds and had perished in battle; nothing remained of the White forces in Mongolia. Under these circumstances, the only thing left for us to do was to save our own lives. Suharev offered to march to Manchuria; Mike offered to go farther south, enter Tibet and join the English in India. The distances were the same, about two thousand miles. However, as Mongolia was occupied by Reds already, it was dangerous to traverse the country or even to remain within its borders. On the other hand, the trip to India was free from our enemies. It was true that we had to cross the desert of Takla Makan, and climb the Karakorum; still, India seemed safer.

Further, Mike expressed his fear of getting entangled in another political adventure in which he had no faith and of following people he could not trust. Future events proved that he was right. Suharev's unit, with the exception of a few men, was destroyed by Chinese, and Suharev himself committed suicide, first killing his wife and four-year-old son.

That evening, when we parted, the majority accepted Suharev's plan. They strongly protested against our departing. Their antagonism was so openly expressed that we were afraid of being arrested if we continued arguing. However, Mike, the leader of our group, passed the word that as soon as it was dark we should leave the camp one by one, so that nobody would notice. We would assemble by certain rocks some two miles south. Each man was to take two horses.

I was sitting in the tent at our evening meal, after which I smoked my pipe as usual. Then I rose to my feet and said that I was going to play a game of cards with some of my friends. Once outside in the dark I crawled to the horses and in a few minutes reached our rendezvous.

"Who is there?" I heard a low voice.

"India," I answered in a low tone.

"Go in peace," said the unseen friend.

Our Cossacks were lined up so that nobody would miss the meeting place. Mike himself came last to make sure that all the men were in, he counted us, and immediately we started climbing the heights of Altai. When we reached the summit we galloped along a slowly descending plateau, not seeing a thing in front of us, in the darkness. It is a wonder nobody was killed. What was even more mysterious, the horses finally brought us together. We stopped for a rest and Mike counted us again. All were there with the exception of a fellow by the name of Ambusha. He disappeared, together with our principal treasury box. Later he joined the Reds at Urga.

We made about thirty-five miles that night and encamped among rocks, so that if Suharev tried to get us we could fight him. However, he was clever enough to let us go, perhaps because he considered us doomed to death anyway. We had become the lost battalion in the wilderness of Asia.

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PART VI

ESCAPE THROUGH THE GOBI

I

FROM the "roof of the world," the Pamir Plateau, magnificent long mountain ranges spread in all directions, forming natural barriers which separated and then held together different races of the globe in their ancient migrations. One of these ranges is called Tien Shan, which means in Chinese, Heavenly Mountains. It goes in a north-easterly direction for several thousand miles and gradually merges with the Altai, or Ghin Shan, which means Golden Mountains. It is the most beautiful mountainous region in the world. Wild tribes of Kalmucks, Teleuts and Kumandintse established their homes here. They were considerably less peaceful than Mongols, and therefore resisted interference in their affairs by those self-appointed saviours, the White generals.

As the Altai runs from Lake Zaisan south-east to the central part of the Gobi Desert, its valleys have been from ancient times a means of communication with the Mongols, and therefore its inhabitants knew very well the terrible cost of installing the baron and his men as rulers over their country. Now, when we reached this district, we had a hard time convincing the ignorant nomads that we were just poor souls who remained true to their White Khan to the last ditch. They called us bandits. Indeed, savages and children have a logic of their own ; a fearless logic that calls things by their proper names.

For a whole week we rode south through the mountain passes of Tannu Ola, and finally descended into the valleys leading to Altai proper. In ten more days we reached the summit of the beautiful Golden Mountains. Beyond those magnificent ridges, fourteen thousand feet high, two important cities were situated: one was Kobdo and the other Uliassutai. The first had been under the rule of Colonel Kaigorodov; the second, under Colonel Kazantzev. The first was a real gentleman; the second a gangster.

After the defeat of the baron, Kazantzev attempted to escape into Manchuria, but was stopped by Reds at Khathyl, and was forced back to Uliassutai. He found his capital in the hands of Mongols who killed all the Russians and took their wives as captives. The military forces that had been stationed there had fled for their lives. Colonel Waidanov, the commandant, had masqueraded as a Mongol and dashed east toward Urga. He reached there, but as a prisoner of the Mongols who delivered him to the Communists. He was promptly executed.

Kazantzev attacked Uliassutai, and hanged all the Mongolian leaders, among whom were eleven most esteemed lamas. He did not remain in his capital, however, as he was afraid of the consequences of his executions. The east was closed to him, and he was forced to retreat westward to Kobdo. Along his path he plundered and killed nomads right and left until he reached Colonel Kaigorodov at Kobdo. Immediately he was discharged from the command and appointed a private in one of the detachments. Colonel Kaigorodov soon left Mongolia, and for some time fought successfully with the famous Red, Baikalov. But one night his army was surrounded, and he died in battle. Kazantzev was captured, brought before the court at Irkutsk and executed.

When we discovered how things stood in Kobdo and Uliassutai, we decided to pass between those two

cities, cross into Dzungaria, and reach Urumchi by Tien Shan.

One afternoon, two intoxicated Mongols arrived at our camp at a small mountain river. One of them was a local prince, the other his privy councillor. They had made up their minds to get us out of their domain by peaceful means, and had got drunk to get up enough courage to accomplish their diplomatic task. They told us they were backed by the powerful might of their monasteries, whose lamas, through their mystic rites, could involve us in dreadful experiences if we disobeyed and stayed in their country.

We laughed heartily in reply, gave the delegation a drink and sent them away with our compliments to their lamas.

It rained all that night. Thirty-five of us crowded into our single tent and would certainly have suffocated by daybreak if our guards had not raised an alarm. A huge mass of water was coming down the valley, turning the peaceful river on which we had camped into a raging torrent. We grabbed our weapons and swam the horses across the swollen stream. When we reached the hills and looked back, our former camp was already covered with water. We had lost all our supplies and warm clothing.

As we reached the summit and began to descend into the broad open valley on the other side, the rain stopped. At our extreme left we saw a lonely rock protruding in the middle of the valley. It was about ten miles distant. Here we decided to rest after a sleepless night. As we came to the floor of the valley, a single shot cracked in the distance. We took our glasses and carefully inspected the hills. We discovered that we were being surrounded by lamas, who were rapidly emerging from mountains on their fresh ponies. Occasionally they shot at us, but the range was as yet too long for bullets to reach us.

Our retreat into the mountains was obviously cut,

and we dashed toward the lonely rock at our left. The race began, as the Mongols descended into the valley and pursued us on all sides. They tried their utmost to cut us off from that rock, as it offered us some refuge. Mike ordered a few men on our best horses to stay and protect the retreat of the rest of the party, and remained himself to lead them. With their modern long-range rifles they could keep the lamas at a respectful distance.

The rest of us hurried on, but mostly on foot, as our horses were exhausted. Finally we reached the blessed rock, where we climbed to commanding positions and awaited the coming of the enemy. At this instant we recalled the horrible death of a hundred of the baron's best officers who had attempted to escape the White army. They had been starved to death, and those who survived were barbarously killed by the Chahars.

"Are we going to go through the same experience?" every man asked himself. Mike ordered all men to leave one cartridge "for your own consumption," as he put it in his cynical manner.

The Mongols reached the rock too, and began slowly to crawl toward us. One of our sharpshooters soon wounded one of the monks, who yelled in pain, like a wounded boar. Two of our Cossacks took advantage of the alarm and confusion among our enemy, ran down and captured the man. They dragged him into our position and threatened to cut his throat at the slightest provocation. The monk was dressed in a rich gown, and had excellent weapons inlaid with silver. Notwithstanding his indignation at being treated roughly, we beat him terribly and finally he admitted that he was the leader of the enemy. We took him up to the very top of the rock, and sabres were held over his head, ready to strike a final blow. We ordered the man to call off his troops or . . . He understood the situation. The fire instantly stopped

when the Mongols saw their leader in such a precarious situation, and a truce was called. All promised solemnly that they would not touch us during our passage through their territory. The leaders, ours and theirs, kissed each other's knives, which became a binding oath to both parties, and we left the battlefield in opposite directions.

In a few days we emerged from that hostile domain and entered another. One day we stopped by a small creek and decided to rest, as our horses were in bad condition. Two of our men went for water. They did not return for some time, and Mike ordered a search. We found one of the men behind the bushes close by. He crawled slowly on his elbows, apparently making a desperate effort to reach us. His forehead was covered with large drops of perspiration, and his mouth was open. A bluish foam was on his white lips. When he saw us, a great happiness lighted his dull eyes. He gathered his last strength and shouted in a harsh, unnatural voice :

“ Poison ! ”

His head dropped and he passed away with a smile, as if satisfied that he had performed his last little bit well. We found the other man dead by the shore.

We packed our horses again and began climbing the steep mountains. The whole day we marched, and at last reached a territory inhabited only by wild goats. Nothing but sharp bare rocks was there. There was little vegetation, and we spread out in a large circle trying to gather enough food for our exhausted animals. Fortunately, we found a little spring. We carefully tested it, and it proved pure. We stayed there that night and all the next day. Our hunting expeditions brought us plenty of food.

The following day we moved south. We suffered badly from cold, and especially from thirst, for we were unable to find another spring. On the fourth day

we killed one of our horses, drank her blood and ate her flesh, then went to sleep in an ugly human heap, covered by saddle blankets. The situation became more and more serious, until finally Mike decided to take a desperate chance and descend into the valley under cover of darkness.

It was much warmer in the valley, and we soon found water. We drank heartily, men and horses, after which we climbed the mountains again to camp. Early the next morning we were awakened by the rattling of rifles. Mongols had surrounded us and had already killed five of our men. In a rage, Mike killed our guard, who had fallen asleep, and the rest of us opened fire. The Mongols hid behind the rocks, and a dead silence ensued. But behind each and every rock we felt the presence of the enemy. They cut us off from supplies and from water. Three days and nights they kept us encircled. We ate horses, sucking the warm blood from the freshly-cut meat. On the third night Mike with two Cossacks left the camp.

"We have to capture one of those devils," he said before crawling into the darkness. And indeed, after long hours of agonized waiting, they brought back a terrified lama. He was very fat, and held himself with dignity. His yellow robe indicated that he was from one of the high Tibetan sects. Blood was coming in several places from under his dress, as a consequence of the Cossacks' knifing him on the road in order to prove that they were in earnest. But that was nothing in comparison with the tortures he sampled before he agreed to lead us out of the death circle that very night. We wrapped the horses' hoofs in rags and, holding them by the reins, followed the lama in the darkness, one by one. Probably he was properly handled by Mike on the road, as he never uttered a sound. In about an hour, the lama told us that we might ride the horses.

All that night we descended the mountains and

finally reached a plateau. In a few more hours we crossed the tablelands, and again came upon bare rocks. The morning dew made them wet and slippery, and they looked like monuments in an old and neglected cemetery. Apparently the rocks contained a good deal of iron ore, for with the coming light we discovered that they were of a dark-red colour, as if blood had been poured over them the night before. This gloomy impression was very depressing to our men, after the nightmare we had all been through. As the sun rose we passed by a deep well and soon after we suddenly found ourselves before an endless sea of sand. This was the notorious desert, the Gobi, or Shamo, which stretches for some eighteen hundred miles across the highlands of Central Asia from Russian Turkestan to China.

We stopped dumbfounded and silently gazed at the snow-white dunes that rolled like waves to the farthest horizon.

"So this is going to be our grave," was the general thought of the men. "Was it worth while going through so many troubles only to be rewarded for our courage, fidelity and endurance by death in the desert?"

The sharp sound of a shot shook us out of our reverie. One of the guards had sent a bullet after the lama, who had attempted to run away. The bullet found its mark, but we were left without a guide and had to face the mysterious desert all by ourselves. Mike almost killed the guard, but what was done could not be repaired. We returned to the well and encamped for a little rest and a meal.

While some men were unpacking the animals, others went in different directions to gather all the meagre vegetation that could be used as fuel. We had a hard time with the well. It was barely two feet round and about twelve feet deep. Several small animals were found dead on the bottom, and the water was smelly and dirty. The first bucketful looked like thick coffee.

It took a long time to clean the well and make the water drinkable. During breakfast we discussed the situation and decided to abandon our attempt to reach India ; instead, we would move in an easterly direction until we could reach the great caravan road from Uliassutai to Kalgan. If circumstances permitted, we would follow that highway and in due time reach China.

After we had eaten, we mounted the horses and rode down the sharp slope toward the desert below. As we reached the bottom of the valley the sandy hills rose around us. The floor on which we moved was soft, and we missed the rattling of the horses' hoofs against the rocks. The narrow passages between the dunes ran in zigzags, and it was hard to maintain the straight easterly course.

Presently we heard cries of joy and noticed that the men in front were dismounting hurriedly one after another and running toward low bushes that grew here and there on small hills of hard sand. It appeared that those bushes were abundant with sweet and juicy berries. This was the first surprise of the Gobi. We had not seen a vegetable, fruit or berry for a year and a half. Soon we all were lying around those bushes, which reminded us of weeping willows, ravenously swallowing the large, red, delicious berries until we fell asleep on our soft, warm, sandy beds. As we had had a sleepless night, we were allowed to rest until late that afternoon.

We covered some ten miles and entered a hard-floored plateau, gradually rolling down for another ten miles, when it became an endless plain. The white shifting sand dunes ended, and the desert proper commenced. From now on the Gobi desert consisted of a hard gravel floor with patches of wild onions here and there, occasional tiny hard bushes of corgona, bluish hills in the distance, and large oases two or three days apart. Mongols inhabited some of the largest of them, and other Mongols occasionally crossed our path. Several

kinds of gazelles, wolves and wild donkeys had roamed here for centuries unhampered, and our travel on the whole was interesting and comparatively easy and pleasant.

The desert is a poem. Its charms have never been fully described, but anybody who once tests it will remain devoted to it for the rest of his life. Life in the desert is life free of the past, present and future; the life of nothingness, the true Nirvana. The desert held us in its embrace for long months. After ninety-eight days, thirteen of us came out alive; the rest remained there for ever.

2

By sunset we came to a little hill, which offered a good camping ground where we could comfortably spend our first night in the Gobi. Immediately the problem of firewood presented itself. In vain we looked for fuel when suddenly we ran into a little secluded hollow, where heaps of fresh wool and wooden implements scattered around indicated that the place had recently been used by Mongols making their felt.

Our Cossacks gathered some poles and broken pieces of wood that were not essential to the felt-making machinery and were about to leave the place when suddenly a rider appeared at the crest of the hill. He stood silent for several minutes, but then curiosity overcame his fear and he began slowly descending toward the Russians. He was a very old man, dressed in a plain blue gown. The tame brown pony carefully held him on its broad back, and they both presented a picture of well-seasoned confidence and self-sufficiency.

Our men were so surprised to see a man in this graveyard, as they called the Gobi, that they stood motionless until the Mongol arrived and said his "Sain beina Urus." Without any hurry, he went to our

horses, unbound his wood, and slowly carried it to its former place.

"You do not need it," he said in his aged cracked voice.

Our men were still silent. With curiosity bordering on superstitious fear, they watched the old man come back. He sat on the ground by a small prickly bush about a foot high and struck his flint several times until sparks set on fire the dry moss he held in his hand. He placed the smouldering moss against the corgona bush and blew hard. Almost instantly the bush was aflame.

"You see, there is enough fuel in the Gobi," the old man said, looking at us proudly.

We gave the man some tobacco and invited him to our camp for supper. He was received with delight by everybody, and especially Mike. Our leader ceremoniously exchanged pipes with the Mongol. After the usual polite and meaningless conversation, the old man said that he had been in Uliassutai twice during his lifetime. He also met with caravans that passed there occasionally.

"Oh, yes, yes, I know all about white people," he said with great significance, and then looked straight into Mike's face, as if not sure that it was all right for him to continue his line of thought.

"Go ahead," said Mike, in curiosity.

"You have been killing each other for five long years. You destroyed your cities and exhausted your food supplies, and now go hungry and naked like wild beasts. The evil spirit governs the white race. They killed their rulers and, like sheep without a leader, got lost in the world. You renounced God and God disowned you. Look out, before it is too late and the Holy Yama will call you before him."

The old nomad stopped abruptly and bent low, toward the fire, as if expecting a blow from Mike. He was helpless as a child, but we respected his bravery.

Mike looked at him with a sarcastic smile, and then slapped him on the shoulder, saying :

"You earned your supper, old man. But look at the skies. Hey, Cossacks, tie the horses and hide the saddlebags. Quickly !"

Dark stormy clouds were moving toward us, and we dashed back and forth, trying to secure our belongings from the oncoming rain.

"Why do you fear ?" shouted the old Mongol. "Do you not believe in your gods ?"

"What do the gods have to do with this ?" answered Mike impatiently.

"See what my gods will do for me," said the Mongol proudly. He climbed to the top of the hill, took off his wide robe and began waving it in all directions, shouting his prayers loudly to the skies. We saw lightning, followed by terrific thunder that seemed to burst the earth open. Instantly the rain poured in torrents, but over the other side of the hill, leaving us dry and safe. We were dumbfounded by the coincidence, while the Mongol could hardly hide his overwhelming joy at his victory. "At last the white devils will know with whom they are dealing," his whole appearance seemed to say. He became talkative and obliging, as if pitying us.

After supper we gathered round the fire, smoking our long Oriental pipes. The Mongol pulled out his rosary and in a low undertone performed a hundred and eight times the famous formula, "Om mani padme hum," and then slowly said :

"I might as well tell you a legend, an important and instructive saga. If you will listen attentively and follow the teachings, it may improve your lot." After pausing awhile, he began his tale in sonorous chanting, the way nomads usually read the passages from their scriptures.

"Om mani padme hum. Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus Flower ! Oh, thou benevolent Buddha, help me

to reveal the truth to these men travelling in the darkness of ignorance and sin.

"Far away in the south and near Djam Bud Win, there is a secret gorge, leading into a deep sub-world. Here rules the Most Illustrious and Most Wise Yama, the Last Judge.

"His palace is built of precious stones, platinum and gold. Yellow, pink, green and blue, red, orange and brown, black and white diamonds make up the ceiling in an exquisite mosaic, which gradually blends into alexandrite, star sapphire and moonstone in the walls. A garnet, stone of constancy; amethyst, the stone of sincerity; emerald, happiness; aquamarine, courage; opal, hope; sardonyx, felicity; turquoise, prosperity; sapphire, wisdom; and many other stones, whose number is as that of stars in the sky, are found firmly set into high walls. And pure solid gold is laid down as a floor in a beautiful design made up of varieties of wonderful colours.

"But nothing could compare with the brilliancy of the justice of the Mighty Yama. Om mani padme hum. . . .

"Here, all departed from life come for the last ordeal, and Benevolent Yama asks them whether they saw Old Age and heard his reminders and followed his teachings.

"'No,' is the reply of the majority.

"'You do not mean to say that you never saw a man getting old, his teeth falling out, hair becoming grey, skin shrinking and getting dark, his back bending, and his feet hardly holding his body, his head shaking on a thin neck, lips, throat and tongue drying out, and painful sighs taking the place of healthy breathing? You do not mean to say that you have not seen all that?'

"'Yes, we saw Old Age, but did not pay attention,' replied the sinners in confusion.

"'Have you seen Illness?' asked Yama again.

“ ‘Have you seen a man whose harmonious union of all the elements composing his body was upset, and who in his suffering spent his days and nights in bed?’

“ ‘Yes, we saw Illness, but did not pay attention.’

“ ‘Have you seen Death, then?’ thundered Yama in anger. ‘Have you ever seen when the Holy Spirit leaves the body, and friends and relatives of the deceased clothe him in his best dress, place him in a bright coffin, and carry him in a procession to the burial grounds? They take off their jewellery, let loose their hair, powder their heads with ashes, and with moans and cries follow the dead.’

“ ‘Yes, we saw Death, but did not pay attention,’ was the same reply again from the sinners.

“ Then Yama rises to his feet and says :

“ ‘You acted wrongly and negligently, despite many and various warnings, and now you will reap your reward!’ And he motions to his guards to take the sinners away to the pit of terrible flames in the boiling volcano. But before they reach the melted lava, their hearts stop beating from horror.

“Om mani padme hum, and one thousand and one times more.”

The old man ended his tale and in nervous excitement began telling the beads of his rosary. We were deeply impressed by the tale, and sat in silence after he had finished. Several Cossacks crossed themselves in the Russian manner and whispered :

“Holy Jesus, have mercy on us.”

The night was quiet. The gentle breeze carried a mysterious aroma cross the sleeping desert. We were lying around, watching the brilliant stars in the black sky above. In perfect stillness we could hear the rhythmical breathing of our horses. Suddenly Mike rudely broke our dreams. He shook the Mongol by the shoulder, and said :

“Now that our souls are taken care of, maybe you would be willing to save our bodies, too.”

The Mongol turned his elderly, wrinkled face, moved the dry lips of his toothless gums and said :

"I might. I will lead you to-morrow to my grandson at the next oasis. He will take you farther to the Wise Man, whose name is Gonchik. Listen and obey him, as he is the only one who can save you, if he will. Now I will go to sleep, as I am tired. Good night."

Three days we rode south through the desert, anxiously watching the hoofs of the horses. Sharp gravel was cutting them more and more, and we had to wrap them in rags. There was little doubt that the animals would not last long under such circumstances, and that we must exchange them immediately for camels. But when, where and how to get camels was the problem.

By noon of the third day we saw a herd of wild horses. As a golden veil, they passed noiselessly out of our sight, and only the leader remained to watch us. One of our men shot and killed the animal. It was the size of an ordinary pony, of a pure gold colour, with black mane and tail and a black narrow line all along its back. Its ears were a little longer than those of our horses, and its tail reminded us of the tail of a mule. Mongols call him a *chigetai*. We made leather shoes for our horses out of its hide, and for several days we ate its meat, which we found very tasty.

Probably Columbus was not more glad to see land than we were to find the oasis that evening. The green spot on the horizon plunged us into a joy that cannot easily be described. We were afraid to trust our eyes, thinking that the green island might be a mirage. However, it gradually grew larger and larger, and soon we were able to distinguish the friendly bushes and emerald-green meadows between them. The horses quickened their pace and soon we were in the oasis.

It was about a mile square, with a well in the middle.

The ground for some ten feet round the well was white from salt sediment. The rest of the space was covered with high sharp grass, and willow bushes about seven feet tall. We had met those bushes before, and again they bore sugar-sweet berries. What was especially pleasant to the eye was the yurt. The grandson of our old Mongol lived here with his small family. He was glad to see the old man, and promised to exchange our horses for camels. He could give us only five now, however. When we told him that we were ready to pay the regular price, he promised to see his friends in the hills, and probably he would be able to get us two or three camels more. He would see to it tomorrow, and for the time being we had better feed and water our animals and have a good meal and a good sleep ourselves. That night we tasted the baby-camel meat which Mongols consider a delicacy. It was—edible. What we enjoyed more was the sleep in the fragrant grass. I noticed that in the clear dry air of the desert the stars shone more brilliantly than in wooded Outer Mongolia and Siberia.

Next day we spent in endless bargaining, and by the evening we owned fifteen camels. We paid with some of our most tired horses, several rifles and some silver. For a pair of field glasses I bought a huge beast with a savage nature. My camel was white, which indicated its good breeding, speed and endurance. The Mongol who rode it refused even to consider the sale until I showed him how through my glasses he could see his own yurt ten miles away. Then he was so overwhelmed that he gave me the camel without further argument. He hid the glasses at his bosom, holding his hands on them all the time until he left camp.

Camels have a bad reputation, but I found mine agreeable and quite entertaining. He possessed one excellent quality that is not found among any other living animals—a deep philosophical indifference. He

was not concerned about his food or drink, the work he did, the road he travelled or the time of day or night he was called on for service. The rougher the treatment the better he seemed to like it. As a matter of fact, he soon got sick if conditions were too easy for him. This most excellent riding animal, and most enduring and powerful beast of burden, which in itself is a rare combination, preferred hot, dry and empty plateaus about four thousand feet above sea level. He did not like juicy grass, and ate wild onions, wormwood, dry leaves, thistle and prickly corgona, which we nicknamed "condensed barbed wire." Best of all, the camel liked an old straw basket.

In the morning the camel is as grumpy and bored as an office clerk on Monday. He loudly protests against being loaded, and his voice is an amusing combination of roaring, moaning, growling and grumbling, bubbling and screaming. Once saddled or loaded up to five hundred pounds, he will walk unhesitatingly for twelve or more hours without a stop. Moreover, he develops such a rhythm in his motion that a rider can safely sleep all this time. During four or more days of travel from oasis to oasis, he does not bother his owner for a drink, and can actually go a whole week without a drop of water. He does about fifty miles a day with his cargo, and can cover a hundred and fifty miles if he has only a rider to carry. This is about three times as much as a horse can do.

Camels are kind. During cold nights we used to lay them down in a row and sleep between them. During the night they never made a wrong movement that might injure us. In the same fashion, they protected us in time of desert storms. At night one camel never sleeps; he keeps guard over the rest. He slowly turns his head watching closely the surroundings, but as soon as he notices some other camel waking up and raising his head, good-bye to the guard; he immediately drops his head to the ground and goes

to sleep, leaving the other fellow in his stead; this one watches carefully until another of his friends raises his head, whereupon he, too, goes to sleep.

We were now about two hundred and fifty miles from the domain of Dzasaku Khan, whose people had almost destroyed us. We passed the famous Shara Nor, some seventy-five miles south of it, and entered a wide and clear space with the sacred Artza Bogdo Mountains a dim bluish silhouette on our left. Farther and farther we moved into the desert, and for the next four days did not know what rest was. It was impossibly hot in the daytime, and impossibly cold at night. We lacked food badly, and water worse. Besides, we suffered from a form of seasickness from being unaccustomed to travelling on camels. With each step they swung from side to side, up and down, back and forth. It was only considerably later that we became proficient in riding camels, and ended by liking it. But now we were exhausted, and it was with the greatest relief that, on the fourth day, we finally sighted the oasis where the Wise Man lived.

The oasis proved to be a large green valley secluded among high sand dunes. A herd of about a hundred sheep was grazing on one of the slopes, and a number of camels were seen among the bushes. Below stood three yurts, with transparent smoke rising straight into the calm evening air. So great was the charm of the picture that we stood at the edge of the oasis in silence for some time. Presently an old Mongol emerged from one of the yurts, jumped on his horse and galloped toward us. "Now there will be trouble," we thought.

"Urus, Urus," the Mongol was shouting. "Urus sain beina," he called his greetings. We just could not believe our ears, so joyful was the Mongol. As he reached us, he jumped off the horse, hastily filled his pipe, and gave it to one of the Cossacks. He came

among us then, patting us on the shoulders and screaming something in delight. He insisted that we should immediately come to his tents and drink his arik and test his food. We could not but follow the crazy man.

He told us that formerly he had been a business man in Urga. He had visited China often and had also been in Siberia several times. Once he went as far as Moscow. He had retired into the Gobi to spend his last years in meditation and peace. His name was Gonchik, but the desert people called him the Wise Man.

His whole family came out to meet us. Gonchik shouted something to them and they immediately became busy as bees, preparing the feast. We ate two fat sheep, drank three bucketfuls of arik, and finished with excellent tea, "which is good for the eye, the ear, the nostrils, the tongue, the body, the speech, good for all," as Gonchik put it. Afterward we filled our pipes with a fresh supply of tobacco while the old man's daughter played a two-stringed violin and sang a most beautiful desert song.

The violet darkness of the warm desert night soon found us in sound sleep, and we dreamed sweet dreams of a contented life in the peace of our beloved pre-war Russia, a dream that never came true.

3

Despite the violent joy he had shown on our arrival, Gonchik appeared to be a calm and reserved person. Often he would retire into solitude and sit for hours alone on the crest of some hill in meditation. He loved the sunrise and sunset, when he was free from his daily work. Once he told me :

"As a calm river deposits all its sediment and runs clear waters, thus a man in peace can liberate himself from turbulent earthly thoughts and see the truth."

"What is the truth?" I asked.

"There are several, but the most important are two: as the earth is a part of the universe all that the earth contains is also part of the universe, and there is no death. The second truth teaches that man is not a body with a soul, but a soul with a body. As the soul is free, man also is free, and sorrow is ignorance."

I never could reconcile the depth of Oriental philosophy with the ignorance of the Oriental masses. Now I asked Gonchik to make the point clear to me. His answer was characteristically Oriental.

"It is useless and dangerous," he explained, "to reveal the truth to the ignorant, and the masses still have to work out their salvation through their personal gods, as you white people do."

I recalled at this instance how the Indian Brahmans cleverly proclaimed Buddha, the philosopher, to be the incarnation of Vishnu, after which it was easy to substitute a noisy ritual in place of the pure and deep abstract teachings of Buddha. The Brahmans switched Buddha into a Holy Trinity: Brahma, the Creator; Vishnu, the Maintainer; and Shiva, the Destroyer. Here were all ten commandments, and, of course, here were the great pecuniary dividends flowing from the ignorant.

Gonchik secured twenty more camels for us, and our caravan now consisted of thirty-five strong "ships of the desert." We paid with the rest of our horses and with whatever useless articles we still had with us, which appealed to the nomads, not having seen them before. Of course, we also parted with some of our silver.

Gonchik recommended that we should travel by night rather than by day. In the hot sun camels could make barely four miles an hour, whereas they would make seven during the cool nights. He also suggested a new route, where the sand would not be

so sharp, where the food was more plentiful, and where water could be found more often. In brief, we would enter a wide "valley" between the Artza Bogdo and Gurban Mountains, which extend for some eight hundred miles toward the Huanhe River. Gonchik would lead us as far as the Chinese town, Ache, on this side of the river; then we would have to travel two hundred miles more through the Ordos Desert before we reached the Great Chinese Wall. We could not miss it, as the wall runs all along the northern boundary of China from Tibet in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east. Probably we would find our way to Youi Lin, a large Chinese city. Here we would sharply turn eastward and ride along the Great Wall for about six hundred miles until we would reach Kalgan, the railroad terminal.

We remained at Gonchik's oasis for three days. Finally all was ready for further travel. Under the supervision of our new friend, we saddled and loaded the camels, and at his command lined up one after another and left the hospitable place at sunset. Many tears were shed by the dark-eyed women, as they had already fallen in love with some of our men.

The desert at the sunset hour was a beautiful sight. The heat had subsided, but it was still warm. The air was fresh and invigorating. In the semi-darkness the desert lost its nakedness, and the distant hills to our left seemed full of life. The sinking sun brushed them with black, purple and gold, and sent a soft rosy radiance over the immense plains. We were moving away from the spectacle into the darkening east. As night set in, Gonchik began to sing one of those monotonous but lovely desert songs, and our camels followed the song in the darkness. It was very comfortable, warm and soft between the two high humps. As drowsiness began to overcome me, I embraced the hump in front of me, laid my head on its broad woolly top and fell into a restful sleep.

The rising sun woke me. In the stillness only one sound could be distinguished, and that was the slow and well-measured walking of the huge animals. Their large, broad feet made a soft hissing noise, as though they wore galoshes. They carried their heads high and with indifference to the world's affairs, slowly chewing the previous day's meal. Their infinite confidence in their own endurance and might impressed me greatly. It seemed that they could walk for ever without tiring. I extended my hand and patted my camel.

"Everything under control, old fellow, eh?" He turned his head and cast a side look at me, and I read in his large long-lashed eyes the answer: "Don't worry, brother. How could it be otherwise?"

Presently Gonchik turned the caravan sharply toward the hills. In an hour we reached a little secluded valley with some vegetation and plenty of corgona.

"Tsok, tsok, tsok," sharply shouted Gonchik. His camel bent his knees and lay down. The rest of the camels followed the leader.

"There is a well here," said Gonchik. "We will camp here until evening."

As we all had some sleep during the past night, we appreciated this way of travel which afforded us a whole day of leisure. Once more we became childishly gay, forgetting everything in the world but the thrill of new adventure. The sun was up already, and while the cook was preparing breakfast we took a shower. For this purpose, we pulled bucket after bucket of water from the well and emptied them over each other. As the water was quite cold, we screamed and laughed, and then began boxing and wrestling entirely naked until the sun dried us. We made so much noise that even Gonchik joined us in the gaiety. Then we got tired and fell asleep. At noon we had another shower and after lunch a little nap, after which we played a ball game. Then dinner was ready and, as we had no dishes, there was no dishwashing. Instead, we

saddled the camels, said good night to each other, and went on our way. The arrangement was very satisfactory to us, and soon we became as confident in the present and future as our camels were.

From then on we moved across a large plain between two mountain ridges, barely visible in the distance. Every morning Gonchik brought us to a new well, where there was plenty of food for the camels. We also were able to replenish our supply of food, as Mongols from surrounding hills visited us frequently. Days rolled into weeks, and we lost count of time, moving on and on to the south-east.

One day two wealthy Mongols from Olon Nor visited us. They offered to sell us some supplies. However, we became suspicious of these two men. First, they rode horses, and therefore did not belong to the desert; second, they were richly dressed in brand-new silk gowns, which ordinary nomads could not afford. Notwithstanding, we agreed to follow them, as we needed their goods very much. Olon Nor was situated on the other side of the Artza Bogdo Mountains, and we had to climb steep rocks. Immediately we discovered that the road was too rough and stones too sharp and feared that our camels would soon be disabled. Gonchik was the first to protest, and then we all stopped, flatly refusing to advance a single foot in the northerly direction, where the two Mongols led us. Gonchik told us, and we believed him, that those men were from Sair Usu, where the Reds were offering fifty dollars for each White caught and delivered to them. Accordingly, we lashed the smart fellows and sent them away with our compliments to their employers. As a precaution, we changed our route that night, crossed Gurban and moved into Golbin Gobi, a desolate country.

Here we lost one of our men under most dramatic circumstances. He had always been very nervous and

easily irritated, but now his quarrelsome spirit had developed to an impossible degree. We tried our best to be lenient, but when he almost shot one of the Cossacks in a quarrel we decided to expel him from our company. The poor fellow was as pale as a ghost when the verdict was declared, but he did not ask mercy. We gave him a camel and some supplies. When we left the camp that night, he remained alone by the fire. For many miles I saw that light, and it made me think of the cruelty of which human beings are capable. I tore one of my old shirts and dropped pieces on the road once in a while so that the lonely fellow could find his way in following the caravan. What finally became of him I do not know.

Another time we shot two Cossacks whom we found in a desperate duel behind the hills at one of our camps. We had two alternatives, either to maintain discipline and order, and possibly come through alive, or let everyone do as he pleased, and perish. One more fellow was executed for falling asleep on guard duty, for which offence there can be no excuse under any circumstances.

Thus from the original thirty-five, only twenty-four of us remained when we reached Bor Dzon, where some hundred Mongolian warriors were prepared to exterminate us. The situation was extremely delicate. Once we began to fight we were doomed, either through military defeat or, what was more probable, through inability to replenish our food supplies. Moreover, the Mongols could easily poison the wells on the road. As usual, Gonchik came to our rescue with good advice. He suggested that we should pretend to be just peaceful Russian refugees from Uliassutai. He and our leader Mike would go and visit the Mongolian chieftain and invite him to our camp, where we would bribe him with a good meal and presents. We liked the scheme, but were afraid for Mike. You cannot trust the Orientals very much. If they once took Mike as

a prisoner and demanded a ransom, which we would not be able to pay, our leader would lose his life. However, he insisted on going, and go he did.

Meanwhile, we hid our rifles under blankets, and arranged the camp so as to impress a stranger with orderliness and peace. My American Colt was selected as one of the presents. We had not been waiting long before our ambassadors returned and told us to prepare a feast. However, we were only able to prepare tea when two riders appeared on the crest of the hills and galloped toward us.

They were the chieftain and his adjutant. He was dressed in a bright-blue silk gown with an elaborately embroidered design of red, yellow and green. On his head was a high Mongolian hat with black velvet base and crimson top, trimmed with ribbons and feathers. His rifle was of a peculiar design, similar to an Arabian weapon. It was richly inlaid with silver ornamentation. He was a proud man, sure of his power.

We greeted him, and he politely replied, after which he dismounted and entered our tent. Here he received the hathyk, or ceremonial scarf, and tasted our best Chinese tea and a few Oriental delicacies. We offered him several presents. He accepted only the cavalry sword and my Colt, leaving the rest of the gifts untouched, as if they were below his dignity as a military man. After a ceremonial smoke with our leader, he suddenly rose to his feet and shouted loudly some command into the empty desert. In a moment the hills were alive with numerous riders in colourful gowns, who galloped down to our camp.

"Stand by your arms," Mike said casually so as not to arouse the suspicions of the Mongol. We spread through the camp in small groups and took commanding positions by our blankets where our rifles were hidden.

The wild riders dismounted and stood their rifles in groups of five, as we do in the army. Leaving the

guns under guard they came unarmed into our camp. They strolled leisurely about, looking at everything with great curiosity, but when one of them carelessly lifted one of the blankets and saw our weapons in readiness, they all became less intruding and much more polite. They smiled at us, and we returned the smiles, but both parties watched their leaders carefully. However, all ended peaceably. The chieftain became convinced of our good intentions, said his friendly "kale-pe-a" and lifted himself lightly into the saddle. The next moment the Mongols dashed away and vanished from our sight as suddenly and as mysteriously as they had appeared. We wondered if we had really seen the Mongols or whether the whole incident was just a play of our imaginations. The Colt was gone though.

A few weeks later a party of Mongols bandits followed us for two days and nights, but never dared to come close, and then they disappeared again.

By the end of the fourth week, we entered Inner Mongolia. The inhabitants resembled Tartars and were Mussulmans as all Tartars are.

One evening when we stopped by some rusty-red hills a very old and feeble nomad came to visit us on "official business," as he explained. This granddaddy was as weak and defenceless as a child, but he was nothing less than the border-guard of the Chinese Republic. We almost kissed the man, we were so happy to reach that border. Now we knew that the Huanhe River was close by and, although there were some three hundred miles more of the desert, still we would be in Chinese domain.

Our friend Gonchik had been very sad lately, and now he declared with tears in his eyes that he had to leave us.

"No doubt," he said brokenheartedly, "you all will be hanged by the Chinese, but I have to go, so I will not witness that."

We understood the man, and paid him as was agreed, and in addition, gave him two camels, a tent, blankets, a fur coat, rifle, and many other articles useful during travel. Everybody gave something as his personal token for the kind, friendly service that we had received from our dear Gonchik. The poor man was so touched that he began to cry, and our own eyes were wet too. He went back by the far southern route, as he was afraid that otherwise he would be robbed on the return trip by the nomads we had traded with. We all stood on the hill and waved our hands to the departing philosopher of the desert, until he disappeared from sight.

4

For several weeks we followed the path of the retreating Chinese army which, after being defeated by the Russians near Urga the previous winter, had fled south in panic. We could not but agree with Gonchik now, that all of us would be hanged on arrival in their country. It would be only natural.

We came across many broken wagons and skeletons of animals on the road. Apparently they had left their sick and wounded behind, for we also found a number of human skeletons, on whose bones the marks of wounds were clearly visible. Some of these skeletons told their grim story of executions.

The next day after Gonchik left us, we entered the narrow passes of the Shan Mountains, which led to Ache, the first Chinese settlement. On the road we met several riders who looked like Chinese scouts. Accordingly, we received them with proper consideration and answered all their questions. Indeed, it would have been easy for our enemies to shoot us all in those treacherous passes. We were at their mercy, and knew it only too well. One thing was

certain : we should not fight unless forced against the wall.

In deep silence we rode on, when suddenly a broad valley opened before our eyes. About four or five miles in the distance we saw a Chinese walled city. Violet smoke was rising from the chimneys in the soft light of fading day. How peaceful and contented that city looked to us ! We forgot even our fears and doubts. We had dreamed of this happy moment for so many months, and now the goal of our dreams was there in front of us, and we would reach it in just a few minutes. Even our cynical Mike changed. Suddenly he thundered at us the unexpected command :

“ Hats off ! ‘ Kol Slaven.’ ”

We solemnly took off our hats and sang the “ Kol Slaven,” a sacred all-Slavic hymn :

“ How great is God in Heaven,
No human can express . . . ”

After we finished the hymn, which moved us deeply, our leader arrayed us in strict military fashion, and led us down the valley. As is customary in the Russian army, we sang our gay military songs one after another, until we reached the walls of the city.

We were met by the adjutant of the commandant, who directed us to a side lane, in order to avoid the crowds in the streets. Soon we arrived at the military barracks, and entered a small yard bordering the officers' quarters. Several tents were erected here for use. The adjutant requested our weapons, and we delivered to him everything, including even our pocket-knives. He chose the best of our rifles, a revolver, and field glasses, asking us not to mention them to his superior. In a few minutes several soldiers appeared on the scene. They carried four huge pots of freshly cooked supper for us, and we were left alone. In half an hour, when we had finished with supper, the adjutant returned, and suggested that we should choose a

representative who should report immediately to the commandant, his Excellency, General Li Po-tan. As I spoke Chinese fluently, I was dispatched to represent the company.

The general occupied beautiful quarters with many servants. At the high gates of his yard stood guards, and in the yard I noticed two machine-guns pointed toward the entrance. A cavalry platoon was stationed inside, and another guard stood solemnly at the massive doors of the large house. Nobody expressed any surprise at my arrival. I entered the house and passed through a reception room to the inner quarters of the commandant. Another guard opened a door and I found myself in a small clean room, with a little writing desk, a huge fluffy bed, half hidden by bright Oriental curtains, and several pots of flowers on the window sill. Long unframed pictures hung on the whitewashed walls. The adjutant invited me to sit on one of the straight, stiff chairs, covered with red calico cushions, and left me alone.

In a few minutes the general arrived. In contrast to the military atmosphere of the surroundings, he appeared a peaceable figure. He was small and of delicate physique. He wore large horn-rimmed spectacles, smoked expensive Havana cigars, and preferred to speak English. He seemed to be well versed in world affairs, knew about the Russian bedlam, and sympathized with those who opposed Communism. It appeared later that at one time he had been influential at Peiping, but owing to intrigues at the capital was exiled to this remote corner of the republic. He spoke on many subjects, but each time he returned for more details about the Bolsheviks, as Communism was popular in China at that particular moment. It was feared that China might establish a Soviet government under the leadership of numerous Russian advisers headed by Borodin. The coup had been temporarily averted by Japanese bayonets, and the conspirators

had fled to Moscow. The famous widow of Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the Chinese radical party, had left the country with Borodin. The commandant belonged to the party opposing Communists. In vague terms he suggested that we should remain with him as instructors for his army, which suggestions I pretended not to understand, and the subject was dropped. In order to distract his attention even more, I changed from English into Chinese. The general was both surprised and pleased.

I spoke the so-called Mandarin dialect, which is used among educated people. He inquired where I had learned it, and I told him my story: I had lived all my life with my parents in Manchuria, and had expected to remain there as a Russian consul somewhere along the five thousand miles of Russian-Chinese border. I was a senior at the University of Vladivostok, and already had made arrangements to become a secretary to our consul at Kalgan, when the war broke out and smashed all our plans. After a few minutes of silence, the general said in a patronizing manner:

"Tell your men they do not need to worry. You will stay here until we liquidate your camels. That money will be enough to pay your expenses to Kalgan. Because you have no weapons to defend yourselves against bandits, I will give you an escort. You will have free lodging every night. At Kalgan you will board the train at the expense of our government, which train will deliver you to the Russian consul at Peiping. Now, you may go. Good-bye."

With sincere thanks I left the general after the two-hour audience. What was most pleasing was that he never mentioned the affair at Urga, entirely overlooking our sins. He pretended to believe our story that we were just poor refugees from Uliassutai. Probably he did not want to spoil the entertaining incident which broke the monotony of his life, and

had therefore decided to be broad-minded and generous. Be that as it may, we could not but feel grateful to him.

It was remarkable, indeed, that we did not die from over-eating at Ache. I shall never forget that first dinner: Russian tshi, vegetable soup, pork chops with lots of onions, potatoes, carrots, soya beans and corn-flour, a dozen fried chickens with spaghetti and baked apples, half a dozen rabbits with buckwheat and toasted bread and red beets, and a stew made of everything left over, for we did not dare to throw anything away. We had plenty of Chinese wine and Chinese pastry for dessert, and strong coffee to top it off. As a special treat I read and translated the Chinese newspaper to a group of my friends, who were still eating the huge melons. For three days we had dinner in the morning, dinner at noon, and dinner in the evening, and plenty of nourishment between meals. As we were still under suspicion, I sent my first letter home to Harbin in Chinese, asking my parents to come to my rescue with funds, which were to be sent to Kalgan, addressed to one of my friends there.

On the fourth day we started out for Kalgan. We moved along the muddy Huanhe River in order to avoid crossing the Ordos Desert. Every three or four miles there was a picturesque village with its industrious inhabitants peacefully engaged in their daily work. We passed many beautiful temples and monasteries erected high upon the hills. We reached the Great Chinese Wall, that miracle of engineering that runs like a huge serpent from hill to hill for fifteen hundred miles. We plunged into the noisy streets of the larger towns and cities.

At last we reached Kalgan, the capital of Chahar province and the gate from Mongolia to China proper. Here we took a train on the Peiping-Suiyuan Railroad, and like savages marvelled at the speed of our

conveyance. In a few hours we had covered the one hundred and twenty-five miles to Peiping, and our train pulled up along the high impressive walls of that city.

We were met by our consul, who remained *de facto* representative of all Russians, although legally the Russian Empire had ceased to exist. For the last time we gathered round a table in a farewell party.

All of us had different plans. Two Cossacks were leaving that night for French Indo-China, where they were going to enroll in the notorious Foreign Legion. Mike and several others were leaving for Vladivostok and the far north to join General Pepeliaev's army in the Arctic. Victor accepted the offer of his friend to become manager of some horse-racing stables at Shanghai, and Mariana, of course, was going with him. I was the one who had no plans. Those came later; in the meantime a deadly emptiness had entered my heart. This was the end of many things, and I did not yet know whether it was to be a beginning as well.

Toward evening I returned to my hotel alone. A little Chinese boy brought me a pot of fresh tea, set it on the hot charcoal and silently left the room. I took my coat off and went to the window. I saw the colourful Oriental crowds in the streets, and in the hazy background, the fantastic, beautiful buildings that made me think of the pictures of old Kyoha and Ishida. Towers of numerous temples rose delicately toward the darkening sky. From a distance, I could hear the tolling of the Great Bell of Peiping, cast fourteen hundred years before Christ was born.

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